

# THE DRAGON

The Student Newspaper for Middlesex Middle School!

## MMS Says Goodbye to Class of 2010

### Dragon senior staff member reflects on time at MMS

By Cameron Van de Graaf, Green Team

Dear MMS,

As we come to the end of the school year, we look forward to the summer, but also look back on all the enjoyable times we had.

For 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, this summer is only a temporary reprieve. You will be returning next year.

But for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, this is the last hurrah in our middle school career. Therefore I will address the bulk of this letter to you, 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Ahead is high school, but behind is middle school, and before that, elementary.

The transition from middle to high school is a momentous one, and marks a shift in one's education. High school is certainly more focused on academic results, yet pursuing one's passions is also encouraged.

It signifies a change from a time of exploration and discovery, to one of specialization into whatever activities inspire you. A myriad of opportunities awaits, especially for those who are motivated.

For the athletic types, you can represent your school on a sports team. If you are

more inclined to a certain club or you aspire to be a Postie, there is literally something for everyone.

The past year was eventful, to say the least. We kicked the year off with the magazine drive. Next were the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Boston and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Colebrook and Ivoryton. Local field trips were interspersed throughout the rest of the year. Some 7<sup>th</sup> graders went to the ever popular waste treatment plant while others visited the beach to collect scientific data. Which one would you prefer?

Thanks to Mr. Sorensen, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Rickert, and all of the students and staff who participated in *Seussical*, the school play. It was once again a spectacular success.

Career Day gave many of us a chance to explore some fascinating endeavors that we may not have known much about.

During the year, many of you gave back to our community by participating in outreach programs. Some examples of these include Kindness Counts and the various team themes.

I encourage you to remember all of the experiences you've had here at Middlesex. From Colebrook in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Boston in 8<sup>th</sup>, these three years have been a tremendous time for growth and enjoy-

ment. I have observed these changes in my classmates, and in myself.

We are more mature now than we were when we first walked through the imposing doors of the rotunda on our first day of middle school. We have also made new friends, and had some memorable times. Take what you have learned here into your future life, no matter what direction it may take.

While I was reflecting back on my middle school experience, I remembered a quotation that my elementary school principal imparted to us departing 5<sup>th</sup> graders. I feel it is apt for all graduations, and indeed for any time of moving on or beginning anew.

That's why I'd like to leave you graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders one more piece of advice given by none other than Dr. Seuss. "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the guy who'll decide where to go."

Sincerely,  
Cameron Van de Graaf,  
Dragon Student Editor

*Special Note: Cameron was named a runner-up for the Aspiring Young Journalist Award by the Journalism Education Association.*

### Career Day Continues Successful Tradition

By Samantha Stine, Tan Team

One of the highlights of eighth grade here at Middlesex is Career Day. The event is designed to give the soon-to-be DHS freshmen insight into other possible jobs that they could choose to pursue.

Here is what you sixth and seventh graders have to look forward to.

The day started out with our inspiring first keynote speaker. His name was Mr. Archey, and he works with International Business Division of Major League Baseball.

He was extremely brave to get up in front of the entire eighth grade, plus parent helpers, and teachers, and explain what his job entails. Although his speech was exceedingly interesting, he was also armed with prizes for any students who answered one of his questions; they were hats and t-shirts with the logos of Major League Baseball teams.

Then, 8th graders were released to go enjoy the pleasure of four more speakers of their choice. The variety of jobs was incredi-

ble! We could listen to anywhere from an FBI Agent, to a veterinarian, from the owner of Sono Field House, to the co-owner of Wishlist.

All of the speakers had a piece of career information, which is very important to know when choosing a career, to contribute. Also, since there were so many careers to choose to learn about, nobody was bored, and everyone had a good time.

To wrap up the day, we had the privilege to listen to a second keynote speaker, Mr. Lowden, who worked for the marketing department of Pepsi Co. He talked about how he originally wanted to work in the field of geomorphology, but decided it wasn't for him, and luckily ended up with the fantastic job he has today. He proved that we should all look into all of our possible opportunities, and potential career paths, because our interests might change as we go on. All in all, Career Day remains a fun tradition. A special thanks goes out to Mrs. Couture and several parents, who spend countless hours coordinating the event.

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## *Tasti D-Lite Comes to Darien*

By Will Steinthal, Green Team

Tasti D-Lite is the newest ice cream store in Darien. They originated in New York, and they boast about their countless flavors and their low calorie and low fat ice cream. I went there recently to see if they really live up to the hype.

When I arrived I was impressed with the overall layout of the store. It was colorful and attractive with posters and colors. In vending machines, they sold water and Propel, which helps show their image of healthy eating.

The first thing we noticed were the prices, which were a little high. It was \$3.75 for a small ice cream, \$4.59 for a small milkshake, and \$5.50 for a small smoothie.

I tried the chocolate, vanilla, and cookie dough ice creams. I was pleased with this because I had the two basic types of ice cream, plus one of their healthiest. The cookie dough, which is 70 calories, was okay, but I feel it wasn't the best I've ever had. However, considering it is healthier than any other I've had, I'd say it's pretty good. The chocolate and vanilla ice creams were a little better tasting than the cookie dough, which is probably due to the fact that they were a little less healthy.

I had a taste of a pomegranate smoothie, and in my opinion, it was a lesser version of Robeks. Both are equally healthy, but since Robeks focuses solely on smoothies, I say that if you are looking for smoothies, I'd suggest Robeks. Also, a small smoothie at Tasti D-Lite is \$5.50, and a large at Robeks is a \$4.99.

My family ordered the ice cream and smoothie, which I had only a taste of. I myself ordered a chocolate milkshake. I got it and tasted it, and it was awful. It tasted like they forgot the ice cream. I wasn't too far off.

We went to a guy who worked there, and he tried it and apologized to us for the bad milkshake. He told us that the guy who made it left out an ingredient. He made us another one free. We were surprised about how accommodating the people were there. When I got the second milkshake, it was loads better. I don't hold any grudge because they fixed the situation right away.

To sum it up, I think that the establishment's goal is excellent. The fact that the ice cream is healthy and tastes like it does is quite an accomplishment. However, in my opinion, the prices were higher and their ice cream wasn't as good as Carvel, Baskin Robbins, or Gofer.

If you are trying to lose weight, I recommend this restaurant highly, but if you're like me and not conscious of your weight, you may still want to treat yourself to the real thing.

## The iPad: Hottest Gadget of 2010

By Cristina Noujaim, Gold Team

The iPad. The hype about this gadget has brought sales of other tablets to their knees. It is all shiny with its aluminum backing and clear new screen. But is this most-anticipated gadget worth your money?

Let's start with the outside. The iPad comes with a USB charging cord and a square adapter to plug it into the wall. It (obviously) comes with an iPad as well.

On the right side it has a volume button and a lock switch. On the top is the power button and the jack for earphones. On the bottom is the jack for the accessories, charger, and extra plugs. On the back is aluminum with an apple sign with purpose; it serves as the radio and Wi-Fi adapter. If you look hard enough, you can see it.

That's about it for the exterior of the iPad, there's not much to see. Now, what about the interior?

The iPad has a 9.7-inch LED backlit IPS display, and it doesn't disappoint. The colors turn out almost as bright as my iMac at home, which is great for a mobile device. It can turn any way, and the screen goes with it.

When you open it up, you see the front screen. It looks just like an iTouch, but with more empty space. You then slide the button like any regular iPhone, and then you see your home buttons.

The home buttons are almost the same as any iPhone. It has Calendar, Contacts, Notes, Maps, Videos, YouTube, iTunes, App Store, and Settings. On the bottom bar is Safari, Mail, Photos, and iPod.

Calendar, Contacts, Maps, and Settings have been made with minor changes,

but they are mostly the same to the old version. YouTube now looks more like the normal YouTube than the mobile one. Safari supports normal websites, and they look fine. The only problem with the internet is it doesn't support Flash, which doesn't bother me much, and it won't bother you if you aren't used to playing Club Penguin or Maid Marian.

In Mail, you can now see all of your messages if you flip the screen. The pictures are amazing to look at; they are all in high definition. You can also import the pictures to Photos, which now looks more like iPhoto on a Mac. The events are in a stack and you can pinch or stretch the pictures to bring them in or out. iPod is basically music and music videos, and Videos contains all your videos, just like before. The App Store and iTunes are turning more and more into the ones on the computer.

Now that you know what the apps are that it comes with, here are some of the most famous apps that are free or you have to buy from the App Store. The New York Times app is like reading a real newspaper, more than reading the website. The pictures are clear and visible and it is easy to read.

The next big app is eBooks. It has a bookshelf and comes with Winnie the Pooh. There is a book store that looks more like the App Store than anything else. They also have an app for the Kindle, so for those who have read their books on the Kindle for many years, it is no disappointment.

Over 200,000 apps have been made for the iPad in the recent months. There are also millions of apps from the iPod Touch and the iPhone you can use on this device; they just won't be that high quality.

And that is about all for the iPad. The rest you will have to figure out for yourself!

## *Students Embark on an Odyssey of the Mind*

By Cameron Van de Graaf, Green Team

Odyssey of the Mind has become a staple activity here at MMS. But few know what this organization is all about.

According to the official web site, Odyssey of the Mind is "an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college.

Team members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics."

Here at Middlesex, we had three teams participate in the process this year. Teams are created in the fall, and they are organized around what problem each student chooses.

Problems are just what they sound

like, a need that can be solved in many ways, over a period of six months. There are varieties to suit each individual's tastes.

There are some that are more focused on acting and others that deal with engineering and creation of physical objects. Others combine the disciplines.

The members of the teams work hard over a long period of time to solve this problem in a creative way.

The teams are mostly self-directed, and take no ideas from their parent coaches. This is an attempt to encourage self-sufficiency; however, it can also lead to difficulties that groups must work through.

Another facet of the program is the spontaneous problems. Teams typically practice these throughout the year, in order

*Continued on page 5...*

# Kobayashi Changes the Face of MMS

By Brendan Ferguson, Gold Team

When he came here from Japan just a few years ago, Taichi Kobayashi had a vision. A vision to make Darien a better place just as it has made him a better person.

In his two years at MMS, he has succeeded and is one of the most legendary students to walk the same halls as we do.

Through his work on the Student Council, Taichi has improved the cafeteria and brought about a trademark event that hopes to be a centerpiece of the seventh grade experience.

We talked to Taichi about his success, his endless ideas, and his future.

**Dragon:** What have you changed in the cafeteria?

**Taichi:** Last year, I got to have a meeting with the cafeteria staff. I presented them with many ideas to further the wonderful cafeteria of MMS. Most of my ideas they were unable to fulfill, but I was able to increase the amount of flavors for the ice cream sundae bar.

**Dragon:** Your newest project has been the Grade 7 Field Day. How does it work?

**Taichi:** The field day will be an all day event for the seventh grade. Unfortunately, the sixth and eighth grades aren't going to participate due to the Nature's Classroom and Boston Trips. The schedule goes as follows:

- Periods 1-3: Two teams have their field day outside while the other teams enjoy their field day inside the gym.
- Period 4: The entire grade enjoys a bagged lunch on the grass outside.
- Period 5-7: The same goes as Periods 1-3, but the teams are flipped.
- Period 8: Awards ceremony and winning team is presented with the Kobayashi Cup.

**Dragon:** Is it true that you are going to another school?

**Taichi:** Unfortunately, it is true that I will not



Above: Taichi Kobayashi holds the "Kobayashi Cup" with Mr. Romeo. The Cup will be passed to the winning team of each year's Grade 7 Field Day. (Photo courtesy of the Purple Team.)

be attending MMS next year. Due to work, my parents have to move back to Japan. I wish to stay at MMS because it has changed me so much, but I legally can't go to a public school in a country where my parents don't live. As a compromise, I will be attending a boarding school in Massachusetts. I hope to visit MMS next year.

**Dragon:** How has Darien changed you?

**Taichi:** Darien was the gate for me into America. It has made me able to have a spirit to help and respect others and to be able to challenge many activities positively. I really love Darien, and I am very thankful for all the people in Darien. Being in Darien and speaking English was a very big challenge for me at first, but it was worth it,

much more than I expected.

**Dragon:** Are there any other plans for the future?

**Taichi:** I only wish for more time at MMS so I can fulfill more ideas in the future. As you know, the time I have left at MMS is limited to only a few weeks and that isn't enough time to complete other ideas.

## FOLLOW-UP

Taichi's Purple Team classmates won the first ever Grade 7 Field Day. The "Kobayashi Cup" hopes to be a fixture of the seventh grade for years to come.

The Dragon and the MMS student body wish Taichi the best as he moves on to bigger and better things in the years to come.

## THE DRAGON STAFF

Student Editors—Barbara Bell & Cameron Van de Graaf

C. Artemis	Sandhya Avula
Kelly Brustman	Oliver Burke
Breana Del Gatto	Brendan Ferguson
Sarah LeHan	Anna Leunis
Austin McLaughlin	Cristina Noujaim
Juliet Ruhe	Samantha Stine
Will Steinthal	Dominick Wood

Advisors - Mrs. Boulrier & Mr. Sorensen

## Deng Returns to MMS; Spreads Message of Hope

By Dominick Wood, Bronze Team

On March 26, Gabriel Bol Deng returned to Middlesex. Mr. Deng, who spoke last year to MMS students about his experiences in the Sudan, came this time to speak about the school being built by Hope for Ariang, an organization he formed himself.

In Ariang, school was held under trees, without books, pens, pencils, blackboards, or even trained teachers. Gabriel saw this issue and wanted to help. He took action and found an architect who was a Sudanese local. He was able to get the school under construction during his visit

on February.

He dug the foundation himself and the children stood in it, pretending to be the walls. As Gabriel explained, the children are metaphorically the walls of the school, because there is no school without children.

The Help the Lost Boys of Sudan Organization, or HLBS, is also trying to help by holding fundraisers such as bake sales, raffles, and silent auctions in order to raise money for the cause.

If you want to help, you can donate money at any time. You can see Mrs. Lareau to buy a t-shirt, or look for members of our group. You can find a picture of the HLBS with Mr. Deng on page five!

## Dragon Staff Reflects on MMS Experience

By Barbara Bell & Kelly Brustman,  
Green Team

As our Middlesex careers draw to a close, the memories we have will never fade. Everyone has a special memory that they will never forget. We interviewed 8th graders from *The Dragon*, and this is what they said.

Question #1—What is our favorite memory from your time at MMS?

- *My favorite memory was the dance at Boston because the teachers were dancing on the chairs and it was hilarious!* - Sandhya Avula, Green Team
- *My favorite memory was being with my friends in the hotel room in Boston.* - Barbara Bell, Green Team
- *My favorite memory was the last day of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade because it meant that summer was FINALLY here!* - Cameron Van de Graaf, Green Team
- *My favorite memory of Middlesex was the whole Boston experience because it was so fun!* - Anna Leunis, Tan Team
- *My favorite memory of Middlesex was Suessical!* - Juliet Ruhe, Tan Team
- *My favorite memory was the Sewage Treatment Plant.* - Will Steinthal, Green
- *My favorite memory was when one of my teachers called me a devil child.* - Austin McLaughlin, Green Team
- *My favorite memory was the school plays.* - Sam Stine, Tan Team

Question #2—What is the funniest thing one of your teacher's ever did?

- *I'll never forget when my teacher (and a chaperone on my Boston bus) tied a leash to one of her students so the student wouldn't wonder off.* - Kelly Brustman
- *I'll never forget my gym teacher's reaction when two kids lost their lacrosse ball and got stuck in a tree behind the fence trying to go find it.* - Sandhya Avula
- *I'll never forget when one of my previous teachers threw all of our shoes out the window.* - Austin McLaughlin
- *I'll never forget when one of my teachers agreed with a student when the student proclaimed to be "special".* - Will Steinthal, Green Team
- *I'll never forget when my English teacher did a karate kick and almost hit one student on the head.* - Juliet Ruhe



## DHS: Here We Come! Be Prepared!

By Austin McLaughlin, Green Team

Getting ready for high school can be stressful and confusing for numerous 8<sup>th</sup> graders. People are generally scared and think that high school is the big time, so you can't mess up.

This is not true, as 9<sup>th</sup> grade is just a new start. Preparing for it is also relatively easy. People generally say that, once you start high school and get "in the zone", it is very enjoyable and fairly easy.

All you need to do to prepare is simply make sure that you have the necessary amount of binders (unless you use an accordion folder or another way of storing papers) for your classes, a backpack, and a healthy mindset.

In high school, most people carry around their books and binders in their backpack with them. Going to your locker can be a hassle with short transition time slots, so walking with a backpack is much for convenient. As previously mentioned, a healthy mindset on high school is important. You can't go to high school thinking that it will be terrible- it will be just as entertaining as Middlesex! High school is regarded as a time of euphoric glee, not raging animosity.

The recap on preparing for high school is simply to bring your backpack and an enthusiastic attitude. High school should not be a time to forsake your happiness just because you're scared, rather, you should embrace it.

## Holly and Molly Provides Final Advice of the Year

Dear Holly & Molly,

I am really nervous about 9<sup>th</sup> grade! I am so scared that I am going to be bullied, and get lost, and...well lets just say, I am so nervous I almost wish I could be home schooled!

- Frightened

Dear Frightened,

There is nothing to be afraid of! Remember in 5<sup>th</sup> grade when we were freaking out that we would be trampled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Well look at us now! We know this school inside and out! It will be the same way in high school. Just remember if you ever get scared to ask someone for help! Trust me, the older kids don't bite!

Dear Holly & Molly,

I always have to go to the bathroom right after lunch, but my study hall teacher won't let me go during study hall! What should I do?

- Needs-to-Pee

Dear Needs-to-Pee,

Try going to the bathroom right after study hall. Get your stuff before lunch and when the bell rings, go right before your next class. If you have to go before that, try going before you go to lunch.

Dear Holly & Molly,

I am really nervous for finals this year. I study a lot, but I don't know if I have covered everything. What should I do?

- Nervous-for-Finals

Dear Nervous-for-Finals,

One thing that might work is by making a chart of everything in the class you have covered this year. Take all your notes from the year, and compress them together to make a study guide. This may sound like a lot of work, but it will pay off. To make sure you have everything, try asking your teacher if you have everything you'll need. I am sure they will be happy to help. Start as soon as possible studying. Whatever you do, do not cover too much in one night. Take 2-4 topics and drill them in, practice problems, sentences, or prompts. (Depending on what subject).

Dear Holly and Molly,

I really wanted to be in this group for the end of the year video, but the other people who were in it told me that they weren't doing it anymore. Then I saw that they had completed the whole video with-

out me! It was so unfair! What should I do?

- Left Out

Dear Left Out,

I know just how you feel, it doesn't feel nice to know that you were told one thing and then lied to behind your back. All you have to do is ignore it, even if it did bother you. Why don't you even make a video with some other people that will show them that you don't care that you left them out? It will give you an opportunity to make a movie.

Dear Holly and Molly,

I am really going to miss my teachers at Middlesex, and I want to do something nice for them before I go. Do you have any good ideas?

- End-of-the-Year Present

Dear E.O.Y. Present,

A good idea could be to make a PowerPoint of just your team and show it on your last team day. You can put all the pictures from the year, and put them with music. It could be very cool and also fun to do. If you don't have any pictures, you can ask your team leader or other people with cameras. Someone is sure of to have taken pictures.

-Holly & Molly ☺

# Continued: What is Odyssey of the Mind?

...continued on page 2.

to expose themselves to the types of problems they will see on competition day.

Here at Middlesex we have had several spontaneous scrimmages between Middlesex Odyssey teams. There is also a scrimmage about a month before the main competition, where teams from across Connecticut compete to practice. These are generally a lot of fun, and are one of the parts of Odyssey that participants enjoy the most.

After about six months of training, Odyssey members arrive at competition day. Usually, Odyssey teams trek up to a school that has been chosen to host the event, and lug their project with them in a car, multiple cars, or even U-Haul trucks! Indeed, just getting the necessary equipment to the site is sometimes the most challenging ordeal in the whole process.

Once participants arrive, they usually do one of two things. Either they start competing in the spontaneous problem arena, or they prepare to present their long term problem to a panel of judges. After they complete one event, they switch over to the other.

All in all, Odyssey of the Mind at its best is an excellent program, where young minds can think creatively without any outside interference. They are guided loosely by some guidelines, and few real rules.

Unfortunately, not every experience is perfect. I observed through my personal experience that the lack of rules often causes the team to devolve and struggle.

To remedy this fact, I believe more parents should take a greater role in the Odyssey experience. This would provide the necessary structure and guidance that students in the program could use.



Deng Returns to MMS! Above: Gabriel Deng (center) poses with members of the HLBS. From left to right: Dane Cahoon, Lucas Fee, Dominick Wood, Deng, Ms. Reinheimer, and Finley Wetmore.

DENGLSPEAKS!

## World Wide Disasters Affect MMS

By C. Artemis, Silver Team

Everyone knows that there have been many natural disasters just since the start of 2010. Looking back on them, they have taken a toll on our MMS community, even if the disaster occurred a world away.

Let's start with the catastrophe that started it all. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010, a 7.0 level earthquake hit the small island south of Florida called Haiti. It was the most devastating quake to hit Haiti in nearly 200 years. The tremor left the whole nation in ruins. The amount of deaths calculated at anywhere from 100,000 to 150,000 people. Hundreds of thousands were injured in one

way or another, and over one million Haitians were left living in the streets, homeless.

What many people may or may not know is that our own computer specialist, Mr. Volcy was affected by this disaster. A native Haitian, Mr. Volcy helped lead the charge here at MMS to raise funds and supplies for the devastated country.

To go along with this massive earthquake, there have been several other large quakes in 2010. On February 27, 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake hit Chile. The earthquake was rumored to have moved one city almost 15 feet over! It left almost 1.5 million people homeless! There have been many aftershock quakes, including a 6.3 that took place just recently, on May 3.

Most recently, a 7.2 quake hit Mexico on April 4, 2010, a 6.9 hit in Qinghai, China on April 14, 2010, and many, many more. On May 27, 2010, there were thirteen separate earthquakes recorded around the world.

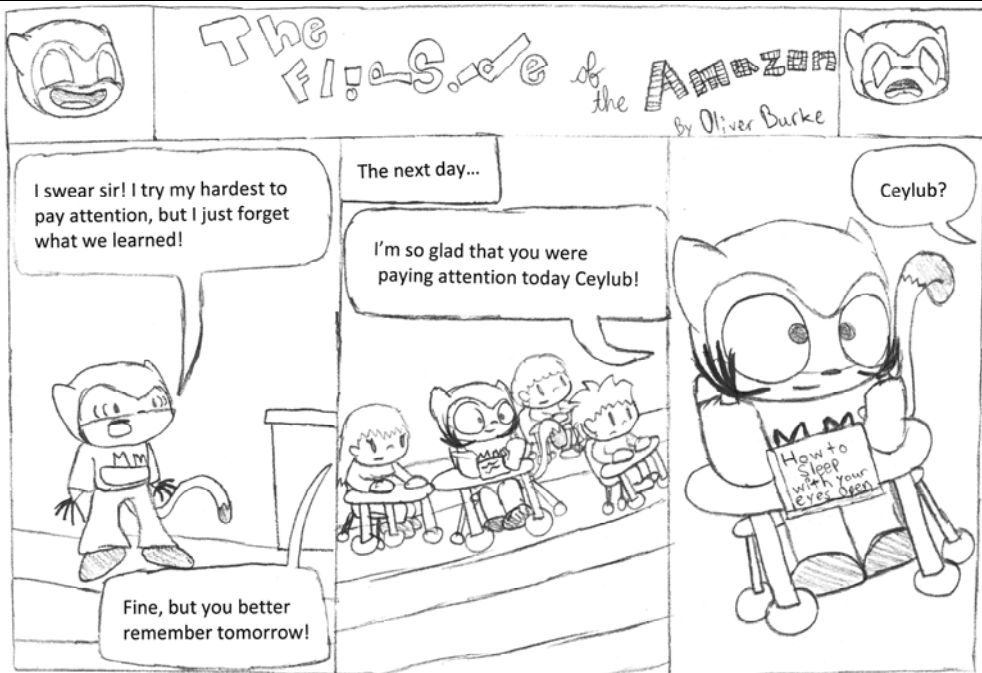
But we haven't just had earthquakes. Don't forget about Eyjafjallajokull.

Even though it sounds more like a bored three-year-old typing nonsense on the computer than a word, it is the name of the worst disaster so far in 2010.

It all started when Eyjafjallajokull, an Icelandic volcano, released some inner pressure, which sent tons of ash into the air. It filled the entire European atmosphere with smoke, so nobody could get through.

This stranded Mr. Keen's 2010 trip in Paris! "We got so lucky to get stuck for an extra school week in the best city in Europe," said one of the students on the trip.

Still, this stopped down many important flights, including the mail. Not to mention it left Iceland (and many other European countries!) in a pile of ashes!



## WRITER'S SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTION EDITION

*A section dedicated to creative writing from MMS students!*

### Days at Middlesex

Kelly Karczewski, Green Team

Day 1: I wore a dress

Of the color pink

My favorite color

First day was filled with delight

Day 19: School has started to bore

Homework starts growing

I wish for the Expo trip

Day 47: Halloween has just gone

The tests are getting tougher

I studied for the first time

In my life

Day 61: Finally Expo is here

I am excited for my bunk

But I hate the wilderness

Day 180: Last day of school

I received an award

No homeworks missed

Day 181: I went casual

Kelly green skirt and white shirt

Green is so refreshing

White is classic

Day 215: Homework is hard

Tests are harder

Fitting in is hardest

Day 332: The poop plant has come

The hard hats are putrid

The sewage river is disgusting

It has deserved its reputation

Day 361: Nothing fancy

Skirt and shirt again

Pink was out of the question

I'd like to say I've out grown it

Day 391: Homework load is not too large

The same for testing

Blending in may have been

My greatest load

But I don't really care anymore

Day 498: Out the window

The flowers are bursting

The sun beats down on the green grass

My greatest need is to be outside

Exploring

All I can think of now

is that

3 years ago

I was different than from now

Middlesex has changed me



### *The Roots We Have Grown*

By Isabelle Perticone, Tan Team

I can't decide your future

But I won't let you forget about the past,  
our past

I can't make your decisions

But I can offer wisdom,  
wisdom from old mistakes,  
memorable triumphs  
And uncontrollable situations

I can't tell you who you are going to be

But I won't let you forget who you were

I can't tell you your priorities

But I can remind you what is important

I can't pave your path in life

But I can give you the blueprints  
for your foundation

I can be your memories

I can be the translucent picture,  
the sketch that will one day become  
The masterpieces of our lives

I am a single seed that starts  
the bountiful field of flowers

And that's what we were  
Just a single seed in the vast field

We arrived not knowing much except that  
this was a beginning  
So, we planted our seed

We roamed the halls,  
explored classrooms,  
And scoured for familiar faces  
We nurtured the soil

It soon became more than just a building  
Filled with books and detentions  
It was school, our school  
And our roots began to grow

Classmates became friends,  
Teachers became humans,  
And the cafeteria became a zoo  
Our roots intertwined  
They became stronger  
And deeply secure in the soil  
We were no longer mere seeds

With knowledge in our back pockets and  
And home field advantage on our side  
The school was our jungle gym  
We sprouted from the soil

New classes, new teachers,  
and more subjects to cover  
We grew like weeds,  
All at our own pace

There were new things to discover  
And mistakes to be made  
If our stem began to wilt  
Our roots held us strong  
Not letting us fall  
So there we were, too young to move on,  
Too old to fear growing

As time progresses  
We have made more mistakes  
And claimed new discoveries  
Blossoms began to grow

Naïve we were, still mistakes to be made  
Discoveries still unbound  
Blossoms take time to bloom

We made more mistakes than planned  
But there were more discoveries than  
thought

No longer seeds in a vast field  
But a meadow of flowers

Each different, yet the same  
Each delicate, yet strong  
All beautiful  
All supporting one another

We no longer fear growing,  
it is time to move on  
But never let go  
Our seed was planted, our roots intertwined  
We first blossomed here

It is time to move on  
That is inevitable  
But the roots will always stay  
in this meadow of flowers  
Our roots will remain in the place where  
we were once a seed in a vast valley

This is where our roots were made...

*The Spotlight Section is dedicated to  
publishing creative student writing!*

*The poetry in this edition were written  
by 8th graders in preparation for the up-  
coming promotion ceremony!*

*To go along with our website, we also  
have a Writer's Spotlight Bulletin Board  
right outside the main office!*

*Also, visit THE DRAGON website for  
more information, and email your origi-  
nal pieces directly to us at  
TheDragon@darienps.org*

*Thank you for your continued support!  
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WRITER'S SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTION EDITION

A section dedicated to creative writing from MMS students!

**Middlesex Garden**

By Natasha Espitia, Tan Team

Middlesex loomed ahead;  
Scary thoughts were in my head  
A tiny seed I was to be;  
The teachers poured their thoughts on me.

New school, new friends, a place to grow  
Every day each experience made me glow  
Sprouting up to reach the sky  
Taking sunlight by and by

Quenching my thirst for knowledge every day,  
Teachers sprinkled new ideas my way.  
Nurturing me along the way,  
Helping me understand a better way.

Sad that the year is over,  
Knowing that I will have to start all over.  
Breaking out from my shell,  
Ready to see my new world go well.

Waking up from a sleepless dream,  
Seeing seeds just like me.  
Kids buzzing around all day,  
Making sounds on their way.

Now the high school looms ahead,  
In full bloom I have nothing to dread.  
Looking forward to all new things,  
That new experiences tend to bring.

Sad to leave this school behind,  
Saying goodbye with a new mind.  
Tears may be shed, but now I know,  
Everything ahead will help me grow.

**The Good Old Days**

By Robbie Juterbock, Tan Team

I won't forget Colebrook and the huge slide  
And how long we stood in line side by side  
To the cold early mornings when we would walk  
I was in shock at how many teachers yelled,  
"Juterbock! Get off that rock!"  
I was so excited to enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade  
Now those years begin to fade

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade Costco was the bomb  
I will never forget it,  
Because I have it taped on my CD-ROM  
As I said, "Phew"  
We were finally done with 7<sup>th</sup> grade  
I felt as if I should have been paid

My years at Middlesex have been great so far  
Gym this year has been pretty gnar  
My teachers and I have grown close  
Even if most of them might think I'm gross

8<sup>th</sup> grade was one of the best years ever  
Everything I have learned turned to  
something clever  
My next step as I begin to sigh  
It is Darien High, that is something  
no one can deny

As I sit in class waiting for it to end  
I still cherish the moment, in no way to offend  
Enjoy Middlesex while it lasts  
The three years here go by oh so fast...

**Swimming Through the Years**

By Julia Black, Navy Team

Middle school years are like learning to swim  
In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, you're just trying to stay afloat  
You stay close to the edge and try to keep out  
of everybody's way  
Not far away are your friends,  
the people you have known and trusted  
Through those long years in elementary school  
Teachers lend you support, lifeguards on the  
shore, remind you to breathe  
With your floaties on, you are ready  
for anything, or so you think  
Then you lift your head up and see  
waves of people unfamiliar to you  
New swimmers like yourself  
But also big kids, tall, strong, and a little scary  
Who seem to fly through the water without fear  
You tense up, but then relax when you realize  
you are doing it  
You are floating all by yourself

Then comes 7<sup>th</sup> grade  
No more floaties this year,  
now you are hanging on to the kickboard  
Working your way to the far edge  
The lifeguards know you won't sink  
They are now pushing you to spread your arms  
and kick your legs  
Fiends cheer you on; you lean on a few and  
keep the others close by  
You're different: more independent, not as  
afraid to make mistakes or stand out  
You're curious too; you want to test the deeper  
waters, but are nervous to get there  
You live in the moment and don't worry about  
what lies ahead  
You are slowly but steadily making your way to  
the far edge and learning your strokes  
By the end, you've outgrown your kickboard  
and can finally swim underwater

Now it is 8<sup>th</sup> grade and time for the final test  
You are familiar with all of your strokes, but  
butterfly is a big challenge for you  
You can navigate the hallways and can stay in  
the deep end without fear of sinking  
Lifeguards trust you; they count on you  
to help out  
Now, friends are the people you turn to in order  
to consult about, well, everything  
But that lonely edge where you used to linger is  
now occupied by someone new  
Young ones tremble as you go by; you are now  
that big kid you once feared  
Flying through deep waters  
Your strokes become more fluent, as your  
arms, legs, and breathing synchronize  
In the end, it was all worthwhile  
The wall is nothing but a memory:  
no floaties, no kickboard  
Finally just you swimming butterfly and  
Looking forward to blue waves ahead



**Unwritten**

By Claire Culliton, Maroon Team

In these past few years  
I've imagined my life as a book  
The chapters are the years  
The pages are the days  
The paragraphs are the hours  
The sentences are the minutes  
And the words are the moments

It's the words that are the foundation to the story  
Just like how the moments are what make up life  
Just like how a word can change the story completely  
I've learned a moment can  
Change the direction of your life forever

The binding of the book is like friendship  
It's what gets us through the year  
It's what keeps the days strung together  
It's the very reason we don't separate  
and completely fall apart

The editors of the book are like the teachers  
They keep us in line and catch our mistakes  
And even if we don't fully agree with them  
They know what's best

And just like in books  
We don't always see what is coming  
Life is full of the unexpected  
There are no guarantees  
But when you think about it  
How good can a book possibly be

If we know exactly what will happen  
It's the uncertainties and the surprises  
That makes a book worth reading

But when things do go wrong  
We can't just decide to shut the book  
And pull a new one from the shelf  
We just have to turn the page and keep on reading  
And see what happens next

In these middle school chapters  
We've made memoirs, friendships, and new goals  
We are the authors of our lives  
We can choose what happens in our life stories  
We have the choice to make it a happy ending  
Or a sad one  
I've learned that it's okay to make mistakes  
That nobody is perfect  
We've written in pen  
We can't change the past  
We can only flip through the previous pages  
And look back on the mistakes, the memoirs, and  
the lessons  
And be thankful we had them

And just like in books, the moral of the story  
Isn't always written in black and white  
Sometimes we have to read in between the lines  
In order to understand the real message  
We can only live in the present and write each line  
One word at a time

Our years are through here  
We can only look forward to the future  
But there are plenty of blank pages  
With endless possibilities  
The rest of our book is left  
Unwritten

## Teachers Remember the Class of 2010

By Sandhya Avula, Green Team

As the school year comes to a close, all the eighth graders are getting ready to move on to the high school. We had an opportunity to talk with some teachers about what they would miss most about the MMS Class of 2010.

*I will miss their great personality and their spunk!* - Dr. Boccanfuso

*I will miss the personality of this year's 8th grade class and their ability to make friends with any student or adult in this building.* - Mrs. Ascone, Bronze Team

*I will miss the really nice kids that I have come to know and their growing ambition to learn and succeed, as they have really come into their own this year.* - Mrs. Baldyga, Tan Team

*I'll miss the sense of humor that this grade brings to class every day.* - Mrs. Boulrier, Tan Team

*I will miss the wonderful originality and creativity of my A+ students. I hope to see them working on art at DHS!* - Mrs. Kaye-Eleck

*I will miss their energy and sense of humor. I have enjoying being able to laugh with the kids this year.* - Miss Lindquist, Green Team

*I will miss the energy of this class, their*

*sense of humor, and their smiles.* - Señora Mendoza, Green, Navy, & Tan Teams

*I shall miss Matt Ross' typed outlines with clip art.* - Mrs. Osterdorf, Maroon Team

*I'm going to miss the relaxed fun of all my classes, and the way my students are always happy in my class...because I pay them to smile.* - Ms. Petersen, Green Team

*I will always remember your eye rolls and your willingness to laugh at my bad puns; in fact, you even began to crack them yourselves! Well, as for your middle school experience, you can now say "Been there-pun that!" Your 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers now "release" you into the world---always be sure to put your best flip-flopped foot forward!* - Ms. Scott, Maroon Team

*I'll miss having the experience of getting to know a new group of students.* - Mrs. Shannon, Navy & Green Teams

*Out of all the groups I have ever taught, I have never seen a class more enthusiastic about **everything** they do. Whether it's the play, or simply a discussion in class, this year's energy is unforgettable.* - Mr. Sorensen, Green Team

*I'll miss being able to have the students that I had last year again.* - Mr. Timmons, Green Team

## Dragon Top 10...

### Things to Do Before Promotion

By Juliet Ruhe, Tan Team

- 10) Talk to new people, outside of your group of friends.
- 9) Ace your last assignments in each class, and leave MMS with a bang!
- 8) Write a thank you note to your favorite teacher. After all they deserve it!
- 7) Throw an end of the year party to celebrate with all of your friends.
- 6) Donate your time to as many school projects as possible, such as spring clean up, food drives, etc.
- 5) Join one of the big clubs at MMS! The Yearbook, Quiz Bowl, Canstruction, or even *The Dragon*!
- 4) Try out for one of the performing arts! The musical, Camarata, Jazz Band, Rockestra, or even the Talent Show!
- 3) Play an intramural sport, and win the title!
- 2) Find one thing you want to make better and do it! Start a fundraiser, work with Student Council, or find a new way to make your voice heard!

And #1: Make a scrap book full of pictures, and memories from your MMS experience! It will help you remember how great your time at Middlesex really was!

## Special Feature: Can MMS Students Learn to Communicate from Chimps?

By Breana DelGatto, Bronze Team, & Sarah Leltan, Red Team

"You are a human animal; you are a very special breed. For you are the only animal who can think, who can reason, who can read." So the kindergarten sing along song goes... But is this true?

Gorillas have already been taught to communicate using sign language, and some dogs have been trained to read commands. So who is to say animals can't use language as well?

One example of inter-species communication is when, in 1974, Boyce Rensberger interviewed a chimp named Lucy who understood sign language. During their interview, Lucy invited Rensberger up a tree, a proposal he declined. This is just one example of a chimp communicating, although in most other cases it's within their own species.

Monkeys can communicate to some extent. And this whole subject has intrigued biologists for years- they've tried to decode the language of monkeys, apes, and baboons by both teaching them human language and listening to sounds in the wild.

For example, in the Campbell monkey dialect, "Pyow!" is a danger call that means "leopard", which is one of their predators. The call for the crowned eagle, another animal they are prey to, is "Hack!" And then here's something that really piques the interest of scientists: when "pyow" and "hack" are

said one after the other, the words forge a different meaning, "Let's get out of here RIGHT NOW!"

Looking at these examples, among others, scientists are tempted to think that these noises equal the Campbell monkey word for things like *leopard*. Sadly, at least for those of you who's life's dream is to debate the pros and cons of bananas with King Kong, that isn't really so.

And those phrases where different sounds are combined to make different warning calls aren't really sentences, either. Besides combining words of predators to make warning calls, they do not combine words to make a new meaning, or have "words" to convey whether a specific predator is near or far away. Therefore, the monkey noises heard in jungles are similar to a student yelling "ouch!" when stubbing a toe - it's like the vocal representation of an inner emotion.

Despite the many obstacles in the path of a chimp language that's near to that of a human's, other primates are still pretty close. So here's the real question: Can monkeys communicate better than some students at MMS?

A seventh grader on the Purple Team says yes, she thinks they can. "When monkeys say something, everyone else understands what is being said. But with humans, you can say something again and

again and they have no idea what you mean."

For example, she said, you could be eating dinner and say "Corn, please"- and instead of just passing over the corn already, someone would be like, "What do you mean by corn?" This poses another question- what's more important; the actual words and phrases in a language or the ability to wield them correctly?

While this question best suited for English class, there is one questions that scientists continue to wrestle with: do chimps have the physical ability to speak? And if so, why aren't they talking?

The human and chimp ancestry charts were one and the same as "recently" as 5 million years ago. And as Lucy demonstrated, many primates cannot only communicate, but also, already have the ability to speak - at least, they have the vocal range necessary to speak different sounds- as large a range as humans.

In the case of baboons, and perhaps other primates as well, it's maybe that they just don't *want* to talk. Scientists think that baboons don't recognize that others have thoughts, even if they think themselves. And without a desire to share information, the uses of speaking are pretty much rendered obsolete.

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