



AROUND THE HORN

RAMSEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

JUNE 5, 2015

**PTA PRESIDENT'S
NEWS AND NOTES**

IMPORTANT DATES

**Monday, June 15 –
Wednesday, June 24**
Summer Fun at Ramsey

**Monday, June 15 –
Thursday, July 23**
Pillsbury K-8 Summer STEM Academy

NOT SO SURE HOW THIS IS GOING TO WORK...

Several years ago, the Minneapolis Public Schools started talking about addressing the overcrowding at Anthony Middle School and looked at moving an existing program at Ramsey Fine Arts and restarting Ramsey as a middle school (I like to call this “A change to the changes in Changing School Options”). At the time, a lot of families expressed concern about what a new school would look like, how two feeder schools would get along, and how you would staff and run such a new school without the tradition, systems, and history that had become expected with the predictable pathway that had been established. “Not so sure how this is going to work...” is something I heard often.

And then the idea of giving all these 6th graders iPads! And NOT using letter grades – instead this thing called “Standards Based Grading”?!? “Not so sure how this is going to work...”.

After the first year there were concerns about adding another grade, how to welcome and integrate the new students, how to work with the new staff, how to use the SECOND floor! “Not so sure how this is going to work...”.

This year, with THREE grades in the building, more new staff, a different sequence for math, 6th and 8th graders walking in the hallways at the SAME time! Is the staff thinking about all these things? “Not so sure how this is going to work...”

Well, I’m pretty sure now: It’s working. It’s working pretty darn okay.

NOT SO SURE HOW THIS IS GOING TO WORK... (CONTINUED)

Evidence – objective and subjective – shows that these students have had an extraordinary middle school experience.

Objectively, test scores are good – better than good, really. But more importantly, the GROWTH in scores has been well above average. Students who came in not meeting standards are making great strides to catch up. Students who came in meeting or exceeding standards are ALSO making great strides – with more than 80% showing normal or above normal increases in their scores. It's working pretty darn okay!

Subjectively, I can't think of a better place for middle school students to have been. Dedicated faculty who want to be in the classroom, willing and able to work with all students to meet their needs. And yes, they did think about all the things that you worried about as the school expanded – and a lot more of the things you might not have thought about. Thoughtful, intentional rollout of the iPads. Well thought-out explanation of Standards Based Grading. It's working pretty darn okay.

Principal Marietta can't say this, the staff can't say this, but I can: Thanks to these students, this staff, and this faculty, Ramsey Middle School has become THE best middle school in the Minneapolis Public Schools, the Twin Cities, and probably the metro area. Ramsey is the middle school all the other middle schools want to be. Pretty darn okay.

Next year, Ramsey will be expanding and growing yet again. While this was the first year with three grades, next year will really be the fulfillment of the original vision for the school: Two full teams at each grade level, a full building, a seven period day, and funding to keep the innovation going. However, I'm hearing again, "Not so sure how this is going to work..."

I'm confident that next year the answer will again be a resounding "It's working pretty darn okay!", and I'd like to challenge all of the new high school students and all of the parents to keep telling everyone that it's okay to be concerned, but that you know it's going to be working pretty darn okay.

Thank you for the opportunity to volunteer with an amazing group of students, faculty, staff, and parents. These three years have been transformational for me, as well as for my son.

Charles Spolyar
(Now Past) PTA President

8TH GRADE DANCE

Finally, a HUGE thanks to Heidi Zimmer and her volunteers for making the 8th Grade Dance a great success. It was an amazing, special event that the "First Class" class will be sure to remember. And, because of the efforts of Mathilda Prentice and Phoebe Schwartz – along with Maya Edstrom: Burroughs alumni and potential high school portrait photographer (<http://www.mayalucia.com/>) in the photo booth) – we have some wonderful photographic memories. This link will take you to the 300+ images that we have from the event: <https://goo.gl/photos/PEzRNhcxXSwPMKRO9>