



Blind Brook Middle School

A Message From the Principal



Dear Parents, Family and Friends,

Hello from the Middle School. It has been quite a wintery season so far and although I enjoy the snow, the weather does not help out our school activities! Nevertheless, we continue to create engaging activities for students, travel to outdoor adventures, and offer many extracurricular opportunities as you will see in the following pages. It seems hard to believe we are already beyond the half-way point for the year. I would like commend the students so far this year for their hard work, creativity, and commitment to creating a positive environment in the middle school.

I would again like to thank all of those who make this Newsletter possible, including teachers, Effective Communications Initiative parent volunteers, and students. This is only a sample of the great things happening here at Blind Brook Middle School. We look forward to another edition in the spring.

We hope you enjoy this second edition of our Blind Brook Middle School Newsletter. Feel free to share your feedback with me at trichard@blindbrook.org. Please have a safe winter season and remember to not use your cell phone in your car as you enter school grounds.

Warmest regards,

Todd Richard

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

March 7: Middle School STEMfest: Students are invited to present STEM projects and to participate in a variety of events. Students should register their projects with their science, math, technology, or computer teacher. Details at: <https://sites.google.com/site/regionalstemfestival/>

March 16: Creating Connections speaker: David Flink

April 15: End of 3rd marking period

May 15: STEAM Career Day: Several community members who work in STEAM fields will be invited to the middle school to share their career experiences with students.

August 24-28: Middle School Summer Enrichment Program

We are very excited about the second summer for the program with longer day and expanded program options. New classes include robotics, digital art, computer programming, theater arts, and culinary arts.

See BBMS website for more details on these events

Skype Chat With Rodman Philbrick



On Tuesday December 23rd, our 7th grade students had the opportunity to Skype with Rodman Philbrick, author of the popular middle school text, *Freak the Mighty*. This book discusses the bond between two boys who find themselves to be “outcasts” from society. Although the story has a very sad ending, Rodman Philbrick provided some inspirational thoughts about the novel and the process of being a writer.

Students asked questions such as, “What was your biggest challenge in writing *Freak the Mighty*?” and “How do you think *Freak the Mighty* affects kids today?” Mr. Philbrick shared stories about how the character, Kevin, was inspired by a young boy that he knew from his neighborhood. He said, “If it wasn’t for the real life Kevin, I probably wouldn’t have written this moving story.”

Along with discussing his inspirations for the novel, Mr. Philbrick talked about what it is like to be a writer. Shockingly, he wrote 9 books before he was able to publish his first novel, *Freak the Mighty*. Mr. Philbrick even shared that his book initially received a lot of criticism before it received positive recognition. Despite these setbacks, he ended our session with one of the most important messages from the chat: “Life is about overcoming the challenges you face and doing what you believe in. It’s about never giving up.”



Outdoor Education: Fall 2014

On November 7th, the 6th grade headed off into the woods for the first of two Outdoor Education trips. A Blind Brook tradition for decades, the Outdoor Education Project provides an educational experience outside the normal confines of the classroom. Students worked together navigating various obstacles of a low ropes course, solving hands-on problems while collaborating to come up with solutions to scenarios not found in a traditional brick and mortar building. These activities, known as Project Adventure, require patience, out-of-the-box thinking, communication, and most of all cooperation.



In addition to Project Adventure, the 6th grade learned about various types of wildlife in our area. Animal experts taught the students about reptiles, amphibians, and birds of prey. The 6th graders had a great time at Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, NY and are looking forward to returning for another set of adventures this spring.



Ready for Her Close-Up!



On December 12th, 8th grade English teacher Cher Treacy made a guest appearance on a segment of NBC's *Today* show. The segment featured holiday gift ideas to give to people (who are not family) that you come into contact with throughout the year. Ms. Treacy served as a teacher representative, and was joined by a babysitter, a hairstylist and a dogwalker. Besides the luxury of being picked up by car service and having hair/makeup done by professionals, Ms. Treacy was also given some of the gifts shown in her segment. You can view Cher's interview [here](http://www.today.com/video/today/56603841#56603841), segment starts at 2:20:

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National Geographic Geography Bee Update

Every year thousands of schools in the United States participate in the National Geographic Bee. This contest is designed to motivate students about the world and increase public awareness about geography. Students from all 50 states and U.S. territories will participate this year.

There are three levels of competition: school, state and national. As many as 100 high-scoring students who win at the school level and score well enough will advance to the state competition. The state Bee champion advances to the national championship in Washington D.C. Congratulations to the following participants for their involvement in this year's school level National Geography Bee held on December 18th :

Grade 6: Dylan Garber

Grade 7: Abe Baker-Butler, Peri Glick, Sabrina Vuong, Aidan O'Neil, Alex Weiss, Sydney Mayer

Grade 8: Carly Kabot, Michael Mariam

This year's school-wide champion is Abe Baker-Butler, with special congratulations to runner up Dylan Garber (2nd place) and 2nd runner up Alex Weiss (3rd place). Abe is now eligible to compete for a spot at the State-Level Geography Competition in March. He will take the written qualifying test on January 20th.

We all wish Abe the best of luck. May the odds be ever in his favor!



Abe Baker-Butler



Dylan Garber



Alex Weiss

Seventh Graders “Dress Like an Outsider”

The 7th graders recently completed their study of a middle school classic, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. To celebrate the novel, students participated in "Dress like an Outsider Day", where they wore outfits that resembled the two social groups in the novel: Greasers and Socs. In addition, they acted out their favorite scenes in the book for their classmates. They also watched and analyzed the film, *The Outsiders*, to conclude their study of the novel. Overall, it was a fun and memorable experience for the classes of Mrs. Schwittek and Mrs. Fellin.



Middle School STEAM News

Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics are full STEAM ahead with new integrated curriculum and student programs! As part of the ongoing STEAM initiative, middle school teachers continue to focus on collaboration and integration of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics.

What Makes the Best Sunscreen?

Do you know which materials block ultraviolet radiation best? Seventh grade students in Mrs. Harrington's and Ms. Schaefer's science classes do.

Seventh grade science students and teachers, in collaboration with engineering technology teacher Steve Giglio, used the middle school's new ultraviolet (UV) sensors for science investigations. Students studied the human impact on the environment, ozone depletion, UV radiation, and the risk of skin cancer. As part of their studies, students made predictions and tested the effectiveness of different colors of cloth and different types of fabric in blocking UV rays. They also tested different strengths of sunscreen. The data from the UV sensors, linked to the LEGO NXT data logging brick, were saved and downloaded to the computer. Students were then able to analyze and graph the data.



On the right, students watch and listen as the UV testing box is demonstrated.

On the left, Mr. Giglio demonstrates data collection using the UV testing box and UV sensors.



Newton's Laws of Motion

Mrs. Sofer's 8th grade physical science students used robotic sensors to study Newton's Laws of Motion. Students worked in groups with Ms. Sofer and collaborating teachers Mr. Giglio, Ms. Schaefer, and Ms. Weistrop, to experiment with how the force of a small car moving down a ramp changed when its mass was increased or decreased.



Above, students perform experiments with help from Mr. Giglio.

At right, Isaac Grodin and Matt Naveran watch their experiment in progress.



Middle School STEAM News, continued

A Coding Party

Girls, Inc. of Westchester County came to Blind Brook to teach middle school girls computer coding and to bridge the computer science gender gap.

Working together to bring new, exciting opportunities to our students, the Blind Brook PTA, middle school principal Todd Richard, and STEAM facilitator Cathy Schaefer, arranged for Girls, Inc. to come to the middle school on the evening of December 2.

Twenty-nine girls participated in the program which was collaboration between Google and Girls, Inc. to expose girls to computer coding. Using web-based coding sites, girls were able to program Disney's Elsa and Anna to skate snowflakes, move an Angry Bird through a maze, and design lights for the White House Christmas tree.



Hour of Code: A One-Hour Introduction to Computer Science

Hour of Code is an effort to expose as many young people as possible to computer coding. According to the organization's website, this year's Hour of Code reached over 93 million students in more than 180 countries. At Blind Brook, the Hour of Code reached students in 7th grade science classes. Students were able to choose among various self-guided tutorials in computer coding. Beginning, intermediate, and advanced coding opportunities were available.



On the left, 7th grade students work on their code.

Below Mrs. Harrington assists Jami Weintraub with her coding.



Middle School STEAM News, continued



6th and 7th Grade Students Create with LEGO NXT Robotics

Robotics Class 6th & 7th grade students developing, constructing and computer programming LEGO NXT Robotics. Students are using a variety of technical resources such as LEGO parts, LEGO NXT-G programming code and other web based resources plus their Chromebook to build & remotely control a variety of robotic projects.



Middle School STEAM News, continued

Putting the “A” in STEAM: Did You Know Robots Can Draw?

Students in Ms. Saglibene's 6th grade classes used robot drawings to create artwork in the style of Vasily Kandinsky. Students programmed robots to draw geometric shapes. These shapes were used by students to create their artwork by layering and adding color to the different shapes. While creating their artwork, students were directed to draw bold lines outlining the robot drawn shapes and thinner lines for shapes drawn freehand or with stencils. By differentiating in this way, the variety of robot drawn shapes that can be created is clearly visible.



Painting with Green Center, Vasily Kandinsky, 1913



At left, students use the robot to draw shapes.

At right, a student enhances the robotic shapes



High School Robotics Club Sparks Interest in the Middle School

FIRST Tech challenge is a robotic engineering challenge for students in grades 7-12. Blind Brook High School student robotics team participants have begun mentoring middle school students in grades 7 and 8 in robotics challenges. At the most recent challenge, seventh grade students Max Gagliardi, Aidan O'Connor, and Stefen Burns attended the competition with the high school students. The High School team won an award for community building and program development for their mentoring efforts. This award also recognizes the team's efforts to assist in meeting the broader goal of establishing a K-12 STEAM program.