



Blind Brook Middle School



IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

December 2: Girls, Inc. coding party for BBMS girls

December 11: Sixth and seventh grade winter choral concert

December 12: Students' baby picture submissions due for yearbook

December 15th Week: Chicken Noodle Soup Drive for Blind Brook Soup Kitchen hosted by the Social Studies department ends

December 18: School-wide portion of National Geographic Geography Bee

Until December 18: Toys for Tots Toy Drive hosted by the Middle School Student Government

See BBMS website for more details on these events

A Message From the Principal

Dear Parents, Family and Friends,

I hope this Newsletter finds all of you safe and warm! This year has been busy as usual, however the focus at the middle school remains on creating the emotional, social, and academic foundations required for 21st century students and citizens. BBMS students utilize technology for learning, participate in classes that challenge their thinking and allow for individual expression, have access to clubs in the fields of music, investment, theater, and visual arts, and practice leadership and collaborative skills in a variety of settings. The success we see with our former students is motivating; however we are continuously reflecting on our practice and challenging ourselves to improve.

This first BBMS newsletter is part of a new communications program this year with District-wide Effective Communications Initiative, with the goal of fostering more open lines of communication between the schools and the community. I would like to thank the parent volunteers and faculty who have helped develop this newsletter and other previous publications on our website. It has truly been a team effort and we will continue to highlight some of the great things happening here at Blind Brook Middle School. We plan on publishing the next Newsletter in February and as always please visit our website for more current articles and information. Feel free to share your feedback with me at trichard@blindbrook.org.

Please have a safe holiday season and remember to not use your cell phone in your car as you enter school grounds.

*Warmest regards,
Todd Richard*





Shaun Derik Teaches Positivity to BBMS Students in “Dreams and Detours”

On October 20th the Blind Brook PTA hosted the return of speaker and performing artist, Shaun Derik, to both our middle and high school. Shaun is from Youth to Youth International, an organization dedicated to harnessing the powerful influence of peer pressure – making it a positive force that encourages young people to live free of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

He presented his program called “Dreams and Detours” in his signature style of music and comedy, pulling volunteers from the audience, performing musically, and speaking powerfully in ways that students understand. He encouraged our students to create goals and implement and maintain positive habits. He used his own personal experiences to identify with those who struggle, and helped motivate all to set goals and persevere. Thank you Shaun! We look forward to seeing you again in the future.



Eighth Grade Earth Science Students Create Hiking Trails and Trail Guides

As part of their *Measuring and Mapping the Earth* unit, BBMS 8th grade Earth Science students were recently engaged in a project aimed at sharpening their map-reading skills. Students were placed into groups and challenged with creating a series of hiking trails in Glacier National Park, Montana. To accomplish this, students became experts with various topographic maps published by the United States Geological Survey (USGS).



Through hands-on exploration, students learned how to measure the distance between locations, identify areas of steep and gentle slope, calculate gradient and determine the direction of stream flow.

After demonstrating mastery of these skills, students were tasked with creating two new hiking trails and accompanying trail guides, each meeting certain requirements. To help enhance their ability to see the topography (shape and elevation) of the land, students used Google Earth to explore the landscape in 3-D. Throughout the experience, students made observations, asked questions, and learned by trial and error.

Sensational STEAM ***(Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics)*** ***New Lessons in Blind Brook Science Classes***

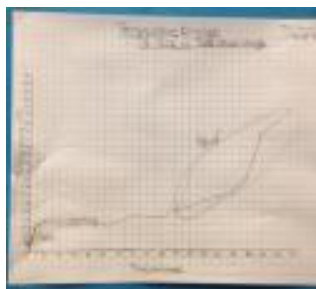
This new lesson is the result of collaboration between middle school science teachers Samantha Sofer and Cathy Schaefer and robotics technology teacher Steve Giglio. It is part of the middle school STEAM initiative. As part of a chemistry unit, students in 8th grade physical science had the opportunity to work with electronic temperature sensors and robotic software to collect data. They were studying the relationship between temperature and phase changes in matter. They measured the temperature of ice before, during, and after melting. In the past, this data would have been collected by hand. Robotic collection of data was more efficient and accurate.

Science	Technology	Math
- <i>Phase changes in matter</i> - <i>Graphing</i> - <i>Data collection, reporting, and analysis</i>	- <i>Robotic collection of data</i> - <i>Electronic sensors</i> - <i>Electronic display of data collected in real time</i>	- <i>Graphing</i> - <i>Time and temperature calculations</i>

Electronically collecting data was engaging for students. The student-created phase change graphs using this data clearly demonstrated for them the relationship between temperature and phase changes. More importantly, there was more class time for discussion of important science and mathematics concepts while the robot collected multiple data points for data analysis.



Students pictured from left to right: Sabrina Schwartzman, Isabel Chandler, Rachel Sachs, Jake Repaci, Gabe Landau and Allie Nardi



Graph by Abigail Strauzer

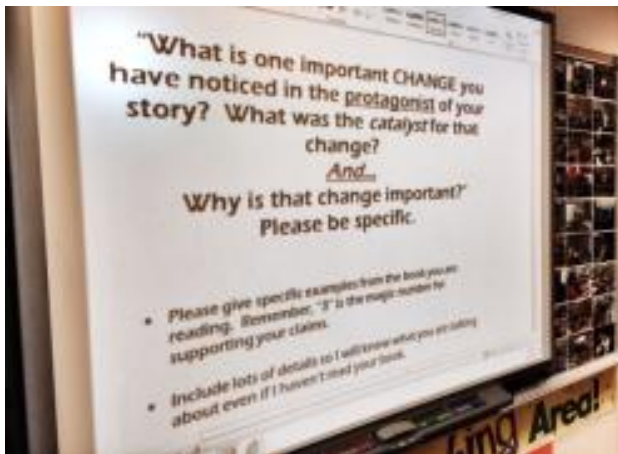


The STEAM collaboration also developed an activity for 7th grade science as part of the sustainability unit and the study of human impacts on the ozone layer of the earth's atmosphere. Students will use UV sensors to test the effectiveness of various materials in blocking the sun's damaging ultraviolet radiation.

You Tube Tuesday: An Exploration of Character

In an effort to integrate technology with many of the literary elements and skills being taught in ELA classes, sixth grade teachers are utilizing the power of YouTube. “YouTube Tuesdays”, as some teachers call it, involve viewing a short video clip (6 minutes or less) by the class and then deconstructing it for its literary emphasis and/or deeper meanings. Many character education and OLWEUS traits are also developed and underscored through the activities and lessons that accompany the clips.

Internal versus external character traits in a book’s protagonist, for example, are examined through the power of character development via YouTube. Throughout the week, students are exploring how the internal traits of a character in their books may be affecting his or her external traits, and why. The students would have annotated on Post-It notes for these traits and responded to some sort of critical response essay question based on the evidence they found. Then, on Tuesday, a YouTube clip helps students think across different mediums, genres, and situational topics, to further enhance the skill or element.



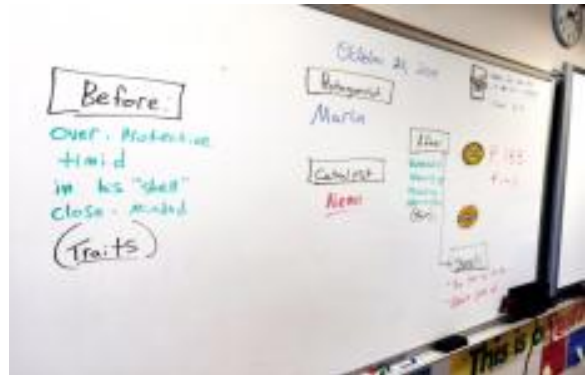
For this particular lesson, the class might watch a clip from a recent TED talk by a boy named Sam who has a terminal illness called Progeria. Or they may see Susan Boyle’s famous 2009 audition on *Britain’s Got Talent*. The class then creates a list of observations in their Writing Notebooks based on Sam’s or Susan’s external traits and, later, generates a second list based on his or her internal traits.

In Susan’s case, the students instantly noted her outward appearance, as did the judges:
Older woman, rather frumpy looking, grey hair, nervous fingers, fumbles with her words, dressed in drab garments, seemingly a joke audition for such a glamorous talent competition.

Yet, after watching the rest of the clip, students eventually arrive at the internal traits Susan must possess in order to do what she did:

Courageous, confident, persistent, humble, open-minded, risk-taker, forgiving, gracious.

These are all internal traits that students start to notice patterns from. All of the fulfilled, truly happy characters in their books possess most of the same traits- even if on the outside they did not fit society's image of "success." Therefore, we also arrive at one of the most important elements that the Common Core Standards are calling students to construct, **THEME**.



What would Susan or Sam want to tell us about how we should live our lives if they were here right now?

- *Life is about taking risks and living fully in the moment.*
- *Image is based on titles. Value is based on a belief system.*
- *Every human life is important and deserving of respect.*
- *You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.*
- *What matters most is what's on the inside.*
- *Never give up.*
- *Humility is sign of greatness, etc.*

Whether it's holding our breath as Susan takes the stage, shedding a tear as we empathize with Sam's struggle, or discovering the catalyst for change in a Pixar short that has far greater depth than we ever saw before... YouTube Tuesdays are bringing life lessons- not just literature lessons- to light for our students.

You Tube Tuesday videos can be viewed here:

- My Philosophy for a Happy Life (TEDTalk by Sam Berns) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36m1o-tM05g>
- Susan Boyle Britain's Got Talent Audition: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jca_p_3FcWA
- Finding Nemo: Keep Swimming <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulucJnxT7B4>

After School Club News

The Investment Club is well underway this year with approximately 20 members participating in the Stock Market Game. The students form their own teams with each team being allocated a virtual \$100,000 to invest in publicly traded securities. The teams compete against other Middle Schools in the region to determine which team's investments produced the highest return over a seven month period. Returning for Blind Brook is Ryan Wallace, last year's regional champion. The club also meets weekly to discuss their portfolio, investment strategies, and developments in the business world.

