ISLANDER MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Belonging in THE MIDDLE

October 9, 2024




## Dear Islander Middle School Families,

At Islander Middle School, we are committed to increasing communication with families and providing targeted information about the rigorous and exciting content our students are experiencing. This monthly newsletter is part of that effort, offering a spotlight on a particular subject area each month. For October, we are focusing on Social Studies!

Based on our Spring 2024 EES Survey data, we recognize the need to better demonstrate how we are challenging our students. In the 2024 Student Survey, 72% of students felt that their teachers provided lessons and activities that challenged them to learn, which is a strong result, though slightly lower than in previous years. In the Family Survey, 47% of parents agreed that their student is challenged with a rigorous course of study, reflecting consistency with prior years but also highlighting a gap in what parents understand about the challenging content we are providing for students.

We are pleased to see positive movement in the data regarding student-teacher communication. In 2024, 62% of students said their teachers often tell them how they're doing in class, a significant increase from 53% in 2022. As we work to enhance and better communicate the academic experience at Islander, this feedback is invaluable and will continue to guide our efforts in improving both rigor and communication.

We look forward to sharing updates on our Social Studies curriculum this month and celebrating the exciting learning happening in our classrooms!

**Sincerely, Ms. Budzius, Mr. Miller, Ms. Mullvain, and Ms. Gallagher**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Oct 11**
  No School
- **Oct 15**
  Cross Country League Finals
- **Oct 18**
  Mid-Term Progress Reports
- **Oct 23**
  Choir Concert
- **Oct 24**
  Orchestra Concert
- **Oct 25**
  All Island Band Night
- **Oct 28**
  Parent Schoology Webinar
- **Nov 11**
  No School

# LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

SHINING A LIGHT ON WHAT OUR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

# SOCIAL STUDIES, DEBATE, AND FILMMAKING

## MEET OUR SOCIAL STUDIES TEAM!

**(Clockwise from left) Beth Milsted, 7th and 8th grade Social Studies; Jordan Balhorn, 8th grade Social Studies and Debate; Russ Skurski, 6th grade Social Studies and Drama; Bruce Harrington, 6th and 8th grade Social Studies; Ben Crandall, 6th grade Social Studies and Spanish; Melissa Gaffney, 6th grade Social Studies and Language Arts and Creative Writing; Renee DeBock, 7th and 8th grade Social Studies; Patri Collins, 7th grade Social Studies and Filmmaking; (not pictured) Litza Griffin-Johnson, 7th grade Social Studies.**



## 6TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

The focus of 6th grade Social Studies for the month of October will be on the Paleolithic Age, where students will learn about early human societies, their tools, and their way of life as hunters and gatherers. We will then explore the significant transition to agriculture and settled life during the Neolithic Age, discussing how these changes led to the development of communities and civilizations. A key aspect of our study will be examining how location influenced the lifestyles and cultures of different groups. Students will investigate how factors such as climate, geography, and available resources shaped the way people in early civilizations lived, interacted, and adapted to their environments. This will help them understand the diversity of human experiences and the rich tapestry of cultures that emerged throughout history.

To make learning more engaging, teachers will incorporate various projects, group collaborations, and simulations throughout the unit. These hands-on activities will allow students to work together, think critically, and apply their knowledge in creative ways.

## 7TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

We have started out the year in 7th grade with a geography unit that has helped students orient themselves in the physical place of the state while giving it historical context. Students have generated maps that have included significant locations in the state. They have also put in personal connections they have to the state.

Some classes have also generated a Come to the Americas travel poster. This too familiarizes students with how the state's geography related to the first people to live here.

October will be devoted primarily to the upcoming local and national elections. This will be a new experience for many of our students. We encourage you to talk to your children about what is happening in the political realm. In classes we will be showing the similarities and differences between state and local elections. We will be looking at the structure of government, checks and balances, and how a representative democracy works. There will be mock elections in class and a culminating letter to wrap it all up.

## 8TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

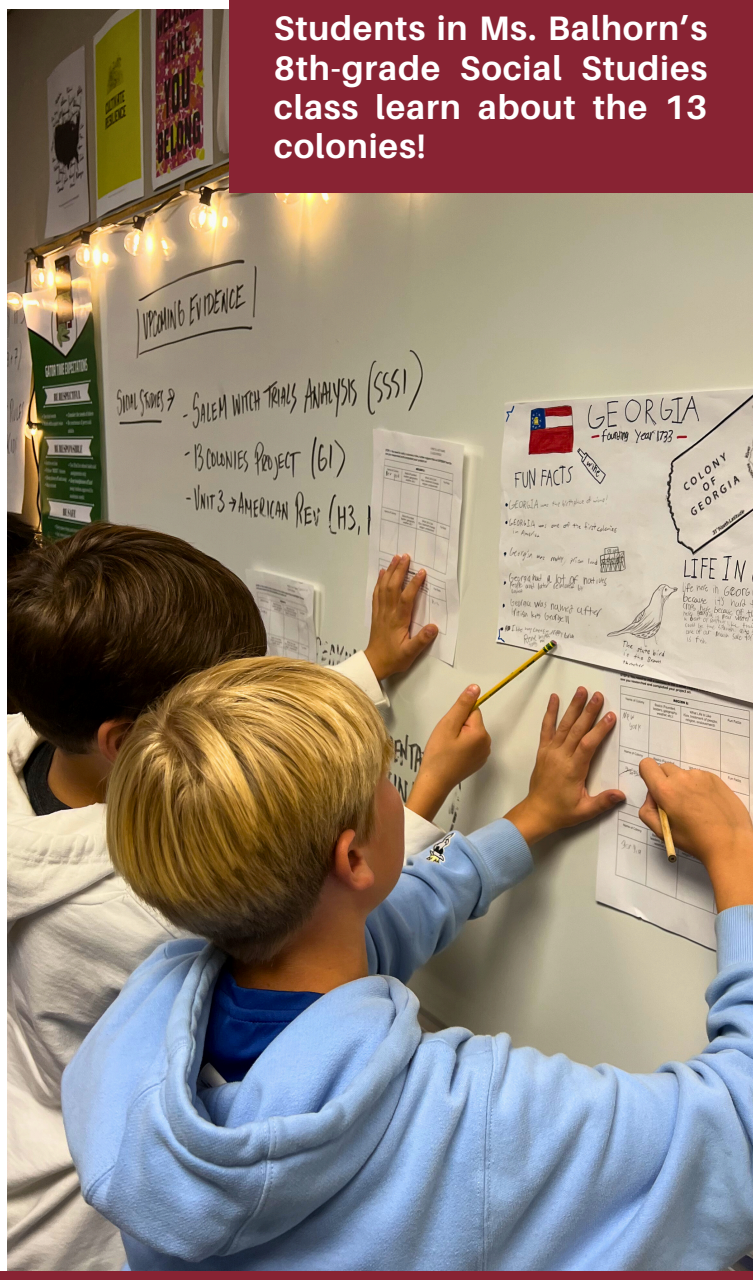
During the month of October, 8th-grade students will be examining the modern-day impact of the original colonies on our economy, geography, and government, enhancing their geographic understanding. In addition, students will analyze the complex role of Indigenous people as European settler interaction changed both worlds, including the arrival of enslaved Africans all of which will lead to the colonial regions developing in different ways. We will explore the American Revolution through the lens of multiple perspectives, learning why it's crucial to consider diverse voices when studying historical events and their impacts.

As they analyze the paradoxes of history, students will learn that it is not a straightforward narrative, but rather a journey filled with choices and consequences. They will also address the idea of silences in history—asking who is not represented in the narratives we study and how to seek out those missing voices.

This ultimately fosters a richer understanding of our past, which allows students to connect and engage in discussions about current events as we follow the upcoming presidential election, deepening their understanding of how American government works and the importance of civic participation.

### STEPPING BACK IN TIME

**Students in Ms. Balhorn's 8th-grade Social Studies class learn about the 13 colonies!**



# PARENT RESOURCES

BRING THE CONTENT HOME WITH THESE RESOURCES AND EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES

News Literacy Project

**Check out these tools for helping your child navigate the upcoming election and fight misinformation:**

**Election 2024:** Mis-information Dashboard

**Get Smart About the News**: Newsletter

**Rumor Guard:** Student Practice

## DEBATE

Debate students have been diligently honing their skills in argumentation, listening, and speaking as they prepare for their first "Big Questions" debates in mid-October. Engaging in light-hearted topics such as "Did Taylor Swift put Travis Kelce on the map?" has allowed them to practice their persuasive techniques while also diving into more serious discussions like "Should the US abolish the Death Penalty?" and "Should the US Government invest more in the protection of water resources?" A highlight of their preparation was an innovative practice session where students debated against an AI chatbot, sharpening their ability to think on their feet and adapt their arguments. Mastering debate is crucial in today's world as it fosters critical thinking, encourages respectful discourse, and equips students with the ability to articulate their ideas clearly and confidently, essential skills for effective participation in a democratic society.



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**In Ms. DeBock's 7th-grade Social studies class, students display their ideas for protecting the flora and fauna of our incredible Puget Sound.**

## FILMMAKING

7th and 8th graders are working together well in learning the basics of filmmaking in this class. We began with learning about how to use the iMovie editing deck. After that students made a series of films that showed their understanding of Camera Shots, Cross Cutting, Dialogue, and the magic of the green screen. Students have done well in learning how to express themselves through film.

October will be about the students creating the Three Minute Masterpiece. These short films will utilize everything they learned during the first half of the trimester. The students will generate original stories that they will see through from start to finish. Please ask to see them as they cannot be posted on a public post for legal reasons.

# TECH TIPS OF THE MONTH

**PRO-TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENT WITH TECHNOLOGY**

## SCHOOLOGY PARENT EMAIL DIGEST

The Schoology Parent Email Digest is a daily or weekly email that provides parents and guardians with a summary of their child's academic performance and activities. It includes information such as grades, attendance, overdue assignments, class updates, and recent assignment and assessment submissions. Get set up with the Parent Email Digest and learn how to customize all your Schoology notifications at the link below:

**Schoology Parent Email Digest and Notification Settings**

## SAVE THE DATE!

**SCHOOLOGY FOR PARENTS**

ONLINE WEBINAR

**Monday, October 28**
**7-8 pm**

**More information to come!**

## MANAGING THE IPAD AT HOME

While iPads are a powerful learning tool, it is essential for families to set boundaries around the proper use of the iPad at home. As a parent or guardian, you have the final say as to how much your child uses the iPad at home and what they can access online. While the iPads are already filtered for inappropriate content, you can set up screen time limits and even your own at-home internet content filters.

**Click here to learn how**

