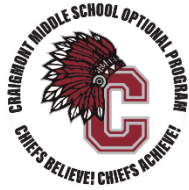


Optional Scholars Newsletter



2025-2026
Quarter 3

All Optional Scholars are enrolled in Honors courses which help prepare them for High School and College. An expectation of an Honors course is completion of at least one honors project a semester. Honors Projects were due Quarter 3 in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Reminder: Please complete your scholars renewal for the Optional Program in PowerSchool. To remain in the program, a renewal must be filed and approved. 8th grade renewals are only for Craigmont High School. If you are considering a different high school, an application must be completed for that school. If you have questions, or need support, please reach out to Ms. Biniakewitz!

Optional Scholars complete a project each semester as a component of International Studies, which they participate in throughout the year and culminate in the International Festival! Second semester projects will be approved soon. CMS cannot wait to see what is created to share with all Chiefs! 😊 Our focus countries for the year are:

6th grade – Egypt	7th grade – Turkey	8th grade – Trinidad and Tobago
	Memphis in May 2026 – Ireland	



CRAIGMONT MIDDLE Join us
May 7, 2026
8:30 – 11:00 AM
for our
INTERNATIONAL Festival

This year we are showcasing the countries – Egypt, Turkey, Trinidad and Tobago, Hungary, and Ireland!

CMS Chiefs are International Learners.
Chiefs Believe! Chiefs Achieve!

We are...
College and Career Ready
Motivated Students

Who are...
Collaborative
Helpful
International Learners
Engaged
Focused and
Striving for Success

In January, Dr. King, from Craigmont High School, joined us for the 8th grade International Bites.



Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration in February!

CMS Chiefs are International Learners! Chiefs learn about other places and cultures in their daily lessons and through World Wise Moments, usually on Wednesdays. Volunteers choose a topic to share with their peers over the intercom during morning announcements. A synopsis of what they share is displayed in the hall if you would like to see what we have learned!

International Moments are shared over the intercom! Thank you, Chiefs, for sharing with all CMS Chiefs Quarter 3!

Divine Washington (7) – Madagascar, Chase Martin (8) – Cambodia, Jayden Johnson (8) – Chinese Lunar New Year, Aniya Morrow (8) – Palestine.

Madagascar is the world's largest vanilla exporter!

It is the year of the Fire Horse. The Horse symbolizes energy, freedom, and vitality, while the Fire element adds charisma, determination, and action-oriented energy. Traditionally, the Fire Horse year is associated with bold moves, dynamic progress, and transformative changes.

Cambodia is a Buddhist country. Their most famous temple is Angkor Wat. An image of Angkor Wat is on the Cambodian flag. Angkor Wat is the largest known religious monument in the world by area.

Palastine is often called the "Holy Land" because it contains numerous sites of religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

WELCOME

A synopsis of what is shared and images are displayed in the hall. When visiting CMS, please take a moment to see all that has been shared Quarters One - Three. ☺

CMS Chiefs are International Learners

Chiefs Believe! Chiefs Achieve!

CMS hosted its Information Session for prospective scholars on January 22. The CMS Band and Color Guard performed and the prospectives were impressed by their talent!!

Alejandra Bardales Castro (6), Samyriah Carter (7), and SaQuan Jean (8) were ambassadors for the Optional Program at Craigmont Middle. They did an AMAZING presentation on the many opportunities available at CMS and what it means to be a CMS Optional Scholar. Aileen Nevarez Perez (6) and Ashley Nevarez Perez (6) also served as ambassadors. All were available to answer any questions prospective parents and scholars had about becoming a CMS Chief! 😊

If you know someone who might qualify to be in our Optional Program, please encourage them to apply at <https://www.scsk12.org/choice/> or have them contact Ms. Bini at 901-416-9913 or biniakewitzee@scsk12.org for more information!



Chiefs Believe! Chiefs Achieve!

CRAIGMONT MIDDLE
Information about being a CMS Optional Scholar
January 22, 2026



"International Bites" for Optional Scholars
Optional Scholars receive information "bites" about the highlighted country and taste "bites" from the culture. 😊

Mexico was our destination in **January** and **Aileen Nevarez Perez (6)** and **Ashley Nevarez Perez (6)** were our guía turísticos!

Informational Bites – Aileen and Ashley’s parents are from Mazatlán, Mexico. They shared information from their visits to Mazatlán. It is known as the "Pearl of the Pacific" and is famous for its 13-mile-long Malecón (boardwalk), a vibrant Historic Center (Centro Histórico), and as a premier Pacific fishing port offering exceptional seafood. We learned that the Pulmonias are a great way to explore the city, they told about their visit to



the “Cueva del Diablo”, and how much they enjoyed shopping at the Oxxo for snacks!

Tasty Bites – The **Nevarez Perez** family provided either a taco de pastor or taco de pollo along with ALL the fixings for the Optional scholars. Both dishes showcase the dynamic nature of Mexican cuisine, where ingredients and cultural influences create



something delicious!! Scholars also tasted “Squirt” – a grapefruit flavored soda that is popular in the Southwest. Thank you SO



MUCH to the **Nevarez Perez** family for making such delicious food and sharing it with us.



Jasmine Wise (8), Kala Collins (8), and L’oreal White (8) helped us celebrate the **Chinese Lunar New Year** in **February**.



Informational Bites - Commonly known as the Spring Festival in China, Lunar New Year is a fifteen-day celebration marked by many

traditions. At home, families decorate windows with red paper cuttings and adorn doors with wishes for the new year. 2026 is the Year of the Fire Horse. The Horse symbolizes energy, freedom, and vitality, while the Fire element adds charisma, determination, and action-oriented energy. Traditionally, the Fire Horse year is associated with bold moves, dynamic



progress, and transformative changes. Did you know the purpose of the Dragon Dance is to drive away evil spirits and bring good fortune?

Tasty Bites– To celebrate the Lunar New Year, scholars tried some traditional snacks meant to bring good luck! Scholars tried strawberry-flavored hard candies wrapped in red and gold foil, colors associated with good fortune. They also tasted sticky sesame lucky candy. Sweets are not just treats but also symbols of blessings, family harmony, and hopes for a joyful year ahead. Did you know fortune cookies are not originally from China? They originated in Japan and were originally produced by Japanese bakers who immigrated to America. Scholars also tasted Oolong tea with peach flavor. Tea is an integral part of Chinese culture. Finally, scholars received a fortune for the Year of the Horse!



Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns for your Optional Scholar(s). If you need help with PowerSchool access, please let me know.

Optional Coordinator
Ms. Biniakewitz (Ms. Bini) 😊
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biniakewitzee@scsk12.org

