Optional Scholars Newsletter

2026 - 2027

Quarter 1

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. Scholars have projects in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. **Please check with your scholar to ensure they are working on their honors projects.**

Optional Scholars participate in International Studies, learning about the cultures of others in our world. Our focus countries for the year are:
6th grade – Madagascar
7th grade – Norway
8th grade – Nigeria
Memphis in May 2027 – to be announced

Optional Scholars International Projects for First Semester will be shared in November. 😊

We are…
College and Career Ready
Motivated
Students

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

The CMS Website is a great place to celebrate all the wonderful things happening at Craigmont Middle.

https://craigmont-ms.scsk12.org/

Under Parents & Students, Photo Gallery and Optional Information are great places to start. 😊

If you have suggestions for how the Optional Program at Craigmont Middle can continue to shine, please email Ms. Bini at biniakewitzee@scsk12.org. I welcome and look forward to your input! 😊

CMS Chiefs are International Learners! Chiefs learn about other places and cultures in their daily lessons and through weekly World Wise Moments. Volunteers choose a topic to share with their peers over the intercom during morning announcements. Thank you, Quarter 1 volunteers:



Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 – October 15 is the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. During the month, our nation celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of Americans with Hispanic heritage. Countries considered Hispanic are Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela – which means Spanish is the primary language spoken there.

These are a few of the ways we celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month at CMS!







For **August**'s International Bites, Optional Scholars celebrated soccer and the 2026 FIFA World Cup. **Dr. Laura Williamson** visited with us to share about the sport she loves!



Informational Bites - Futbol, or soccer, is the most popular sport in the world! There is evidence of a "type" of the sport being played for over 2000 years in Mesoamerica, China, Greece, Rome, and Japan. The rules we follow today were "born" in England in 1863. The first World Cup was held in 1930 and included men's teams from 13 countries. The first Women's World Cup was played in 1991. 48 countries competed in this year's men's World Cup and was hosted by North America.

Tasty Bites – **Spain** won the World Cup this year. In Honor of that, Dr. Williamson made Espinacas con garbanzos (spinach and chickpeas). It is an iconic tapa rooted in the Moorish and Jewish history of medieval Spain. Phoenicians brought chickpeas to the Iberian Peninsula, while North African Moors introduced Persian spinach and aromatic spices like cumin to the region! To drink, scholars tried Bitter Kas which is Spain's iconic aperitif. An apéritif is traditionally a light, dry, or slightly bitter beverage consumed before a meal to "open" the appetite. Bitter Kas is crafted with a unique blend of 21 carefully selected herbs and spices. With its bold, bitter profile, and vibrant red hue, it is a favorite with the Spaniards. Scholars also received a futbol sticker from Dr. Williamson. 😊





Chiefs Believe! Chiefs Achieve!



Jimmy Ramirez Lopez (8) and **Bryce Johnson** (8) were our "agentes de viajes" in **September** to **Guatemala**. Informational Bites – Futbol is the undisputed king of Guatemalan sports. The national team is nicknamed *"la Azul y Blanco"* (the blue and white). Guatemalan history spans 18,000 years! It is home to the Ancient Mayan Civilization. They were conquered by the Spaniards in 1524 and won their independence in 1821. While there are still many indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala, Spanish is the official language. Their money is also called the Quetzal after the national bird. Scholars received small Guatemalan flags and bracelets made in Guatemala.

Tasty Bites – The Ramirez Lopez family (Jimmy's family) provided our tastes! They made Guatemalan Chow Mein. The Chow Mein's roots trace to late 19th-century Chinese immigration to Guatemala, when laborers from Guangdong brought Cantonese stir-fry techniques and noodle traditions and spread it to Guatemalans. It has become a beloved, affordable staple in Guatemalan cuisine. Jimmy's mother also made Atole De Platano. It is a warm, creamy Latin American beverage made from ripe plantains, milk or water, sugar, and spices, traditionally enjoyed as a comforting drink. The concept of atole (Hispanic hot drink) goes back to Mesoamerican civilizations like the Maya and Aztecs! **Thank you so much to the Ramirez Lopez family. We enjoyed the tasty bites!!** 😊







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.

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