



COUGAR NEWS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR CMS FAMILIES

• NOVEMBER 2019 •



LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

CMS Families,

As you may know, as a full staff, we are training ourselves in **Developmental Design** which is an approach to teaching and learning that helps teachers learn how to structure their classroom environment so they are better able to hear from students and effectively respond to their developmental needs. Through this approach, **students feel connected, empowered and safe.** In this type of classroom they are more readily open to taking academic risks, thereby engaging more with the curriculum and each other. Developmental Design has as its tenets the importance of creating a learning environment which meets our students' developmental needs for autonomy, competence, relationships and fun.

One piece of Developmental Design that CMS has been working on for a few years now is our **Teacher Advisory (TA)** structure. Every day begins with students attending advisory where the teacher advisor and students greet each other and participate in either a share or an activity. The greeting can be something simple

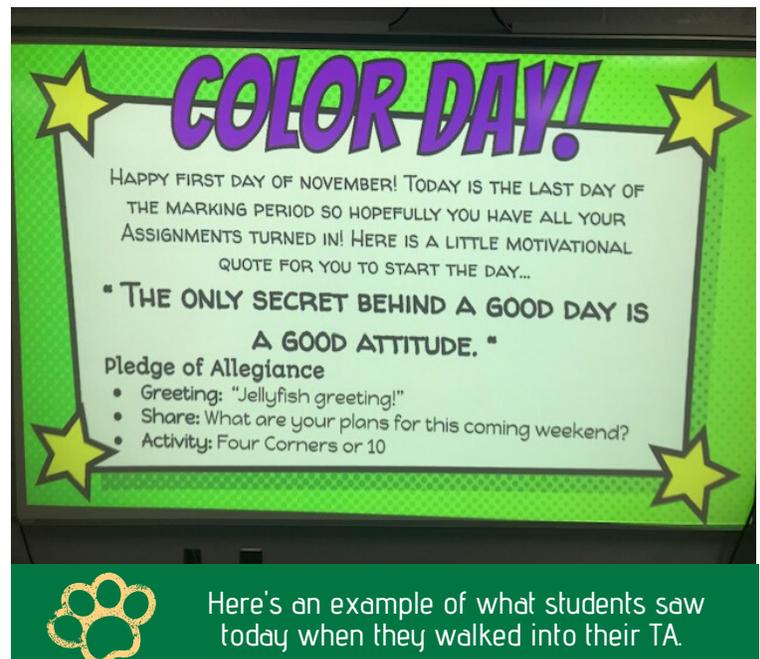
DATES TO KNOW

NOVEMBER

- 1 Quarter 1 Ends
- 4 Quarter 2 Begins
- 25-29 School Recess: No School for Students

DECEMBER

- 4 Early Release Day: Noon Dismissal
- 6 Dance • 6 pm • CMS Cafeteria
- 12 Winter Band Concert • 7 pm • CHS Auditorium
- 13 Ski & Board Program: Week 1
- 19 Winter Choral Concert • 7 pm • CHS Auditorium
- 20 Ski & Board Program: Week 2
- 23-1/1 School Recess: No School for Students



Here's an example of what students saw today when they walked into their TA.

Continued...

such as turning to your neighbor and saying, “Good morning” using the student’s name and giving a high five, to something more complex such as greeting someone in a different language. This provides opportunities for all students to feel **welcome** and **included**. It also is a first step to building community within the group. The second part of TA involves either a share or an activity and sometimes both. A share provides opportunities for the teacher and students to get to know each other better - **relationship building**. Often, students discover they have something in common with another student who they may not typically be friends with outside of the TA group. This can lead to expanding friendship groups. The activity portion is an opportunity for our students to have fun. Sometimes the activities are just for fun and other times the activities are tied to academic learning.

This year, we are focusing on strategies for **supporting social and emotional learning** in an effort to empower students to stay in the classroom. More and more students are coming to school feeling anxious, having difficulty staying focused, or needing more physical movement during the day. As a response to this need, teachers are supporting in several ways. Many are providing **optional seating** in their classrooms from the traditional chair and desk, to stools and higher tables, to standing at counters, to short stools which allow students to wiggle on them, and some others.

In addition, every classroom has a **“tool kit”** with a variety of items that help students to stay focused or refocus while staying in the classroom. Included in this kit are items such as weighted lap pads, finger labyrinths, mindful coloring sheets, bubble timer, hand grips and kinetic sand, to name a few. Students can access these items as needed. Teachers have taught the purpose and use of each tool and have them available in the classroom.



Another strategy they are utilizing to keep students in classrooms is the **Take A Break** idea. We call it "TAB In". Each classroom has a space in the room dedicated for students needing to take a break. This is not a punishment, instead, it is a separate place in the room where a student can go for a few minutes to have a break from whatever is happening in the classroom. In that space, **students can reflect on what is happening** and reset themselves by either sitting quietly or using one of the classroom tools to help them get back on track and rejoin the class activity. This focus ties directly to training the full staff participated in last year about training resilient students. The strategies we learned in those sessions was the foundation for our focus this year in **supporting all learners** to have their needs met in the classroom.

Respectfully,

Michele



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FOOD DONATIONS NEEDED

Each year, the CHS Cares Club collects food donations to make Thanksgiving baskets for families in our district that wouldn't otherwise be able to afford a Thanksgiving meal. Also included in the basket is food to get the family through the week since many of them depend on the breakfast and lunch served at school. To help fill the baskets, they are requesting donations of non-perishable food items. The most requested items are canned vegetables, rice, pasta, sauces, baby food, canned fruits, crackers, stuffing, and pumpkin pie filling. There's a bin in the lobby to collect the donations. Thank you!



EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION TEST

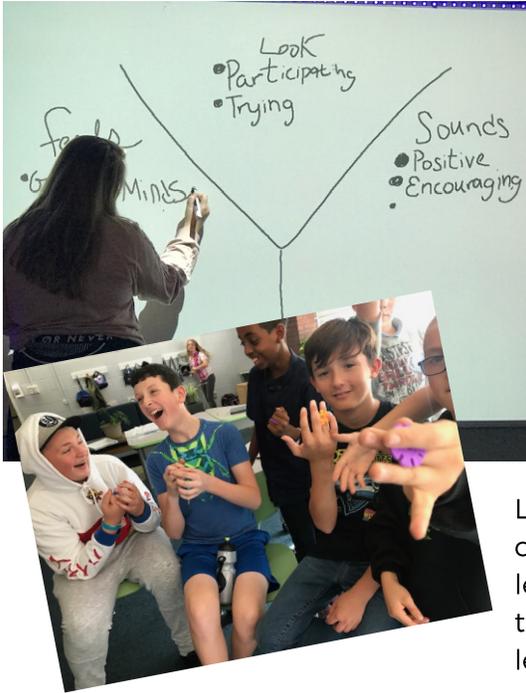
The district's annual emergency notification test scheduled for **Wednesday, November 6th at 6 pm**. This is an annual test to ensure that families will properly receive our emergency calls, text, and emails. If you do not receive an emergency notification at 6PM on November 6th, please contact the front office at 264-5800.

HEALTH NOTE: VAPING

There has been a lot of information in the news about vaping, including the effects it has on young people and we have been dealing with issues of vaping and having vaping materials brought to school. We understand that it can feel overwhelming and difficult for families to talk with their children about topics like these. To help foster a discussion, we thought it might be helpful to pass along [this article](#) about vaping with tips on how to talk with your children.



WHAT'S GOING ON AT CMS



ESSENTIAL EXPECTATION: LEARN

Last month, I wrote about our Essential Expectations which are skills that we, both as a whole district and individual school, are intentionally teaching to our students. They are Think, Learn, Communicate, and Act. At Colchester Middle School, we are focusing on LEARN this year. We have broken the Learn expectation into three parts: participate, persevere and problem-solve. At recent student conferences, students shared their learning which included reflections about their participation in both academic and non-academic experiences.

Last week, teachers introduced the second part of LEARN - persevere. You can ask your child to share with you how they persevere in the activities and learning opportunities in their classrooms. Students will have opportunities throughout the school year to reflect on their perseverance using the learning scale. They will share out on this at conferences in March.

TRADITIONS: SPIRIT WEEK!

Student Council plans two spirit weeks each school year. This past week was our first one and students and staff were in full swing showing their school spirit! On Wednesday, to go along with the "wear pink" theme, students watched an informational video put together by student council members raising awareness about breast cancer. I hope you enjoy the pictures reflecting themes from each day.



WHAT'S GOING ON AT CMS

MIX IT UP DAY: AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

This past Tuesday, CMS participated in Mix It Up Day which encourages students to identify, question and cross social boundaries. Students were encouraged to mix and mingle throughout the day, especially at lunch time, with the goal of stepping outside their comfort zone and speaking with someone new. It is a simple act with profound implications; interactions across group lines can help reduce prejudice and bullying behaviors. When students interact with those who are different from them, biases and misperceptions can fall away.

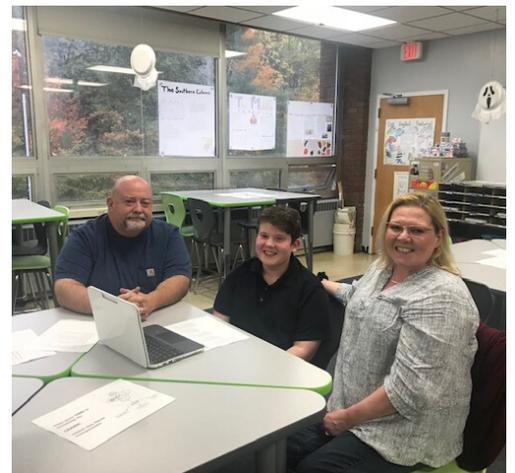
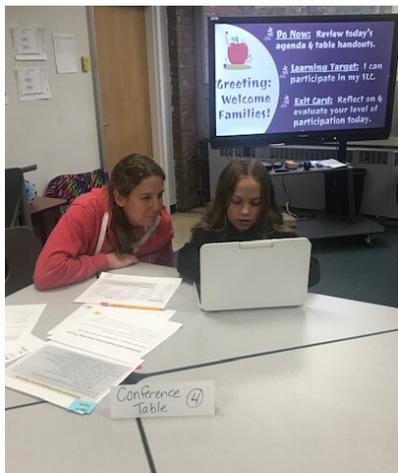


During the day, students participated in a scavenger hunt. With a Looney Tunes character theme, each student and adult were assigned a cartoon character known to others by the character pin they wore for the day. Throughout the day, students had to find all the characters and have a sheet signed by each one. Every student who obtained 20 signatures received a small prize. All students who collected 30 signatures were entered into a drawing for an iTunes gift card.

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

On October 17th we held our Student Conferences. This was an opportunity for students to share their learning so far this school year. Your child(ren) have been working to be a more active participant in the learning process. Through this active engagement, students are understanding specifically what it is in each class the teacher wants them to learn, how they can measure their progress toward achievement of that learning and reflection of their participation in the learning activities. Students will continue to engage in the reflective learning process as they work with their teachers this year.

Thank you to all who participated in conferences and remember, if you had to miss, you can always schedule a time to meet with your child and teacher by calling or emailing the teacher. Be sure to mark your calendars for the spring conference on Tuesday, March 3rd from 10:30-6:30.



PARKS AND RECREATION



The **Colchester Youth Basketball League** (CYBL) 2019-2020 Season is quickly approaching! The season begins the week of November 18, but you must register early to be put on a team – the earlier you can get it in, the better! Teams are offered for Grades 1 – 8.

Visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation/CYBL> for details. Note that the Rec League is separate from the Middle School teams, but still offers a great opportunity to keep playing basketball and building your skills (regardless of experience), whether you are on the Middle School team or not. We also need volunteer coaches! If your child is playing basketball this year, please consider being a coach to help us ensure all of our teams have leadership to help shape our young athletes – we even offer training prior to the season starting to help you get oriented.

There's still room in the **Teen CPR/First Aid Class** on 11/25 (ages 13 – 17) and in the **Teen Cake Decorating Class** (grades 5 – 8) with Allie Gomez-McLam of Re-Marc-Able Bakery on 12/7. Be sure to sign up soon to avoid missing out on these great programs. Register online at <http://bit.ly/WebTracColchester> or visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation> for more details.

Parents/Caregivers: The Colchester Parks & Recreation Department would love to have some new volunteers join our **Winter Carnival planning committee!** Help us plan attractions that will appeal to youth in our community! The Committee works with a dedicated contact from the Parks & Recreation Department, meeting once per month (Oct. – Jan.) and then playing an active role volunteering at the event in February. For more details, or to join the Committee, please contact Mike LaPan at mlapan@colchestervt.gov or 802-264-5648.



PTA NEWS

Questions?
ColchesterMiddleSchoolPTA@gmail.com

Our focus for the school year is to fund enrichment for the students, faculty and staff at CMS. Do you have any ideas or interest in participating? We'd love to have you come to a meeting or contact us at ColchesterMiddleSchoolPTA@gmail.com. Our next meeting is TBD.

One way to get involved is to help with the bottle hut. We're especially looking for someone with a truck who can take bottles to the Cap and Cork (located near Price Chopper in Colchester) either midweek or on the weekends. Believe it or not, we receive most of our funding from bottle returns! We use the money to help support field trips, snacks for SBACs, and grant requests.

We hope to see you at our next meeting!

