

The Lotus Lowdown

February 24, 2023



Maria Francisco, Principal

Renaissance Book Fair February 28-March 3

Calling all book lovers! Renaissance will be having an IN-PERSON book fair on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of Feb. 28, March 1 & 2. March 2nd also happens to be National Read Across America Day! Watchung Booksellers is so excited to provide some top notch titles for our middle schoolers to purchase.

Students will be able to shop during school hours from 8:20 to 1:00 during homeroom, electives or lunch. Accepted payments are cash, check or ATM/credit card. Teachers will also have a wish list of books if you'd like to gift a staff member. 20% of sales go to the Renaissance PTA! We hope your Ren student will come ready to shop for a good cause! Please click on the link below to access the flyer.

[Renaissance Book Fair 2023](#)

Renaissance Student Connor Sherwin receives multiple Robotics Awards

Connor Sherwin and his Partner, who make up the two-man team, Jolly Blue came in 3rd in the Regional FTC Robotics competition, won the Prestigious Think Award, and came in 2nd for the Inspire Award, which qualifies them to advance to the State's competition.

Connor and his partner went up against High School teams of 16 with tens of thousands of dollars of resources and they held their own. We are so very proud of Connor and wish him and his partner the best of luck as they move forward to the state competition.



Student Council News: (Ms. Girardi)

The next Student Council meeting will be next **Tuesday, February 28**. Students will meet as usual in **Room 111 (Ms. Dunn's room) from 3:15 - 400 pm**.

Our Candy Gram sales were a HUGE success! This year, we sold 500 Candy Grams and made a profit of \$800. A great big "thank you" goes out to all of our amazing classroom reps for their help!!

Students should make every effort to attend Tuesday's meeting, as we will be finalizing the details of our Winter Dance being held on Friday, March 3.

Winter Social: March 3, 2023 6:00-8:00pm.

We have rescheduled our Winter Social to March 3, 2023 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Entry fee will be \$5.00 and our PTA will be selling pizza as well so be sure to send extra money if students want to purchase snacks/pizza.

Caregiver Restorative Justice Night: March 14, 2023

Please join us Tuesday, March 14, from 6 pm - 8 pm, for dinner and an opportunity to learn more about Restorative Justice and experience what your students experience when they sit RJ Circles. To RSVP, please click the link below to access the link to register. We are hoping to have as many families as possible - please consider joining us.

[Caregiver Restorative Justice Night 2023 Registration](#)

PLEASE Help Renaissance win up to \$2,000 through MFEE:

Help win up to \$2,000 for Renaissance! [The Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence \(MFEE\)](#) is our town's local education fund that supports *all* Montclair students, teachers, staff, and caregivers. Renaissance students receive social/emotional support and innovative teaching tools through MFEE grants, teachers boost their learning through out-of-the-box Professional Development grants and MFEE's new Teacher Learning Communities, and families get resources and support through MFEE Programs like Learning Circles on Race, PEEPs in Nature, and Navegadores Escolares. Your donations - no matter how small - fuel all of this work! From now until February 28th, any donor who gives \$20 and above will be entered in a lottery to award a \$1,000 grant to their favorite school. Two winners will be chosen! CHB and Hillside won \$1,000 last year; it's Renaissance's turn! Be sure to "credit" Renaissance's team page when donating. While you're there, check out all of the ways that your donations boost learning at Renaissance. Donate here: <https://givebutter.com/mfeeforthem2023/renaissance2>

Renaissance UnPlugged: February 14, 2023

Renaissance's first Unplug Day was extremely successful. Students and staff alike, although initially hesitant as to what an entire day without technology would entail, received the day and the message positively and have indicated that they would like to participate in a monthly Unplug day. We are thrilled to start to share the benefits of human connections and engagements that are possible when we put our devices away.

Mr. Gazzillo, 6th Grade Math teacher and team leader, started the UnPlug initiative at Renaissance and has provided our students and staff with guidance and support throughout. Thank you Mr. Gazzillo.

Our students should also be commended for how well they participated in being present for an entire school day-free from the distraction of their cell phones.

We look forward to implementing additional Unplug days and also sharing information regarding the impact of the overuse of technology on students' social, emotional and academic development in the coming weeks.

Dr. Kristen Niemczyk-Kistner Presents to Parents on Social Media Safety

Dr. Kistner presented to parents at this week's PTA meeting. The in person meeting provided parents with an opportunity to share ideas and concerns. Dr. Kistner provided parents with important information through a well thought out presentation. She also made herself available for questions afterwards where she provided additional guidance. Below you will find some of the resources shared with parents. Thank you Dr. K!

[Social Media Safety Presentation](#)

[Social Media Red Flags For Parents](#)

[Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences | Common Sense Media](#)

[Movistar: Love Story](#)

Model UN Club: (Ms. Thomas)

Model UN meetings will begin the second week of March - either on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Meetings will be held after school in Room 203 with Ms. Thomas. Please email her at sthomas@mpsdnj.us if you would like to be a member of the team. Model UN will be held at Montclair High School in late April. The date has not yet been set.

Dance: (Ms. Lorusso)

Students in 6th, 7th, and 8th have been creating movements inspired by events, people, poems, and songs about Black History and Black Lives Matter. Students are looking forward to performing for the school in celebration of Black History Month.

Time and date TBD

6th Grade Dance Company, "Rise Up" by Andra Day

7th Grade Dance Company, "Stand Up" from the movie, *Harriet*.

8th Grade Dance Company, "Pray For Me" by The Weeknd, Kendrick Lamar

7th elective, "DNA" and "Humble" by Kendrick Lamar

8th Grade Dance Elective, "This is America" by Childish Gambino

Music: (Ms. Spagnuolo)

Music Classes 'Unplugged'

Last week Renaissance students participated in 'unplug it' day. Music classes enjoyed a day of old school songwriting. Students worked in small groups using guitars, keyboards, simple chord progressions and lyrics to create their own love songs to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Band Classes

This semester 7th and 8th Grade Band students are working on some challenging music arrangements. Students should be practicing a minimum of 3 days per week. If any band student is seeking extra help, please schedule a time for a private or small group lesson with Ms. Spagnuolo.

Renaissance Middle School Stem Fair: March 30, 2023 6-8pm- UPDATE

Science: students should be continuing to work on their STEM fair project. The link below can be used to access which student has chosen which topic. All details of each assignment are listed in the stem fair packet on Google classroom.

Please contact Ms. Cullen with any questions or suggestions for our list.

[Science Fair Amazon Wish list](#)

[STEM Fair Student Packet](#)

[Science Fair Topics](#)

6th Grade:

Last Week the 6th Grade had their United Nations Culture Day. Students rotated between 4 stations:

1. Financing the United Nations/Financial Literacy.
2. Culture Artifact Gallery Walk
3. United Nations Web Quest
4. United Nations work on Climate Change.

We had guest speakers, parents Glenn Haberbusch and Max Tourtelot speak to the students about their work in the United Nations and Finance field. Students also shared information about their cultures with their peers. [UN Culture Activity](#)

Students should bring their own water bottles and headphones to school regularly.

Students should also charge their Chromebooks every night.

Math Update:

This week, we continued our Pre Algebra Unit and learned about the Distributive, Associative, Identity and Commutative Properties. Students took interactive notes and completed Go Formatives among other activities. Next week we will discuss how to simplify expressions using the Mathematical Properties learned this week.

Food Bank:

This week, Hittel, Gazzillo and Mandal Homerooms volunteered at the Hillside Food Bank, next week Jordan and Dunn Homerooms will volunteer at the Food Bank.

7th Grade:

Teachers must post Marking Period 3 grades by March 9, so be sure to stay up to date on all assigned work.

If you have not yet had a parent conference and would like to meet with the team, we are now filling in spots for the March 30 and 31 conferences - those 2 days are early dismissals. Please contact Ms. Cullen at ecullen@montclair.k12.nj.us if you would like to meet.

ELA:

For English language arts next week students are going to be studying Malcolm X from his autobiography "Learning to Read".

Social Studies

Students worked on a small group presentation during class this week. Next Monday and Tuesday they are presenting their work as one of the early colonies - will they accept French Catholic colonists from Canada? Which colony will the French Canadian Catholics choose?

Next Wednesday/Thursday, students have a mid-unit quiz. In class, we reviewed the handouts they should be studying, which are posted in Google Classroom. The Quiz will be 25 multiple choice questions.

7th Grade Trip to the Chelsea Art Galleries and Highline:

Our 7th grade students visited the Art Galleries in Chelsea, NY today and walked the Highline from the Shed at the Hudson Yards to the art galleries. The focus of this trip was on urban redevelopment and the connection between art and contemporary social trends. See pictures below.

[7th Grade Chelsea Trip](#)

8th Grade:

Washington D.C. forms - Please sign and return all forms as soon as possible.

Payment plan schedule;

2/03 - \$80

2/24 - \$100

3/17 - \$100

4/14 - \$100

Math

The student's stock graph assignment is due next Friday, March 4. The students picked a company and recorded its closing price every Monday and Thursday from January 9 through March 2. The students then plot prices on a graph and calculate the percentage increase/decrease from one day to the next.

Science

This week students learned how to make a wet mount slide. They prepared onion (plant cells) and donated their own cheek cells (animal) to view under the microscope. This Friday students are getting assessed on the parts of the compound light microscope. Next week we continue adding to our life science vocabulary as we explore the structure and function of plant/animal cells. Please keep in mind this is a vocabulary heavy unit so we are encouraging review games, the use of flash cards and other study strategies to help acquire these new words.

ELA

Students are starting to read the American classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. We are analyzing the historical context and setting of the novel to better understand the novel's theme. As we read, we will explore bigger ideas such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance.

ELA/SS For the whole month of February, students will be working on a collaborative Social Studies and ELA project to analyze the Black experience in America from 1800 to the present day. In groups, students will research a specific historical topic and create a newspaper that reports the experiences of African Americans.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We are beginning our new round of volunteering to start on February 10th by going to Toni's Kitchen. We will be going full force on February 24 with, hopefully, a couple of new partners in volunteering. It has been wonderful thus far!

8th Grade Trip to NJPAC-Warriors Don't Cry

Last week, Renaissance students traveled to NJPAC to watch *Warriors Don't Cry*. 'An original one-woman play that dramatizes the battle of integrating Little Rock's Central High School. The story is told through the lens of a contemporary young activist, Ya Girl, who is ready to call it quits on leading her million-plus Instagram followers in the fight for social justice.'

[Warriors Don't Cry](#)

[Pictures](#)

Important Upcoming Dates:

- March 1, 2023 Beginning of Women's History Month
- March 3, 2023 Winter Social 6:00-8:00pm
- March 23, 2023 Curriculum Thursday, 1:25 pm Dismissal
- March 29, 2023 Evening Parent Conferences, 1:25 pm Dismissal
6:00 PM-8:00 PM
- March 30, 2023 Parent Conferences, 1: 25 pm Dismissal
1:30 PM-3:30 PM
- March 30, 2023 STEM FAIR