

MoCo Monday Minute

Tuesday, September 6, 2016 (Due to the Labor Day Holiday)

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The MCHS Key Club had their first meeting last week.

Quote of the Week - "Teachers are coaches of understanding."

Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in *Understanding by Design Framework*, ASCD, 2012



History Unit Begins at McNabb – Eighth grade students at McNabb Middle began their history unit starting with Native American culture and explorers. Mr. Adam Allison, a 7th grade English Language Arts teacher who has distant Blackfoot heritage, gave a presentation during the students Tribe Time last Thursday. He spoke on the importance of Native American Culture that is rich in struggle, strife, and triumph. So many aspects of our modern life were adapted from the old Indian cultures practiced centuries ago, especially our music. Mr. Allison explained that the Native American flute was an integral part of the native lifestyle and was an important component of the greater picture which wove together the tapestry of Native American life. He spoke about the rich history of our community in Montgomery County, in that its people and its roots are seeded into many different tribes. He then demonstrated three handmade flutes that represented three distinct sounds from three different tribes.

High Attendance Day – Statewide High Attendance Day has been set for Tuesday, September 20th. September is National Attendance Month. The Kentucky Directors of Pupil Personnel will provide rewards to schools with the highest attendance. Please encourage students to participate in ensuring high attendance each day, and particularly on the 20th.

Auditions for Missoula Children's Theatre – The Gateway Regional Arts Center presents the Missoula Children's Theatre performance of Peter and Wendy. Auditions are open to students in grades K-6th and will be held on Monday, September 26th at McNabb Middle School. [Click here](#) for more information.

Seventh Grader Plans to be a Train Conductor – Jordan Thompson, a 7th grader at McNabb, has a very big passion for trains. R.J. Corman Railroad Company heard about his plans to be a train conductor. They sent him some cool stuff from their company in addition to a personal note wishing him a good school year. Jordan is pictured with his teachers Ms. Stephanie Chamberlain and Mrs. April Lambert.



Student Attendance – Mt. Sterling Elementary carried the ball with a one-day attendance high of 97.83% on Thursday and a weekly high of 96.39%.

KEHP Open Enrollment – The Kentucky Employees' Health Plan open enrollment period will be October 10 - 24 and enrollment is **mandatory for all employees**. You should receive information towards the end of this month or the first of October to review and plan your needs for the 2017 school year prior to the open enrollment period.

Dates:

- Sept. 7 – Camargo 1st Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 7 – MSE 2nd Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 7 – MSE 4H Parent Meeting, 5:00 p.m.
- Sept. 8 – Camargo 2nd Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 8 – MSE 3rd Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 8 – Girl Scout Parent Night, 4:30 p.m., Camargo
- Sept. 8 – Read to Win Rally, 5:30-7:30 p.m., MCHS Media Center
- Sept. 8 – Volunteer Orientation, 6:30-7:30 p.m., McNabb Middle
- Sept. 8 – Board of Education Special Session – Tax Hearing, 5:30 p.m., Clay Community Center
- Sept. 9 – Camargo 3rd & 4th Grades Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 9 – MSE Kindergarten Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 9 – Camargo 4-H Meetings (4th Grade)
- Sept. 9 – 4H-FFA Livestock Show & Sale, 6:00-9:00 p.m., Chenault Agriculture Center
- Sept. 10 – ACT Test, 8:00 a.m., MCHS Zone II Lobby
- Sept. 12 – Mapleton Kindergarten Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 12 – MSE Fall Picture Day
- Sept. 13 – Mapleton 1st Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 13 – Mapleton SBDM Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- Sept. 13 – Volunteer Orientation, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MSE
- Sept. 14 – Mapleton 2nd Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 14 – MSE SBDM Meeting, 3:30 p.m.
- Sept. 14 – Mapleton PTO Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 14 – Camargo SBDM Meeting, 3:00 p.m.
- Sept. 15 – Mapleton 3rd Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 15 – Camargo PTO Meeting, 3:00 p.m.
- Sept. 15 – MCHS SBDM Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 16 – Mapleton 4th Grade Grandparent's Day
- Sept. 20 – High Attendance Day
- Sept. 20 – MSE PTO Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 20 – MCIS SBDM Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

- Sept. 21 – Mapleton PTO Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 24 – Volunteer Orientation, 9:00-10:00 a.m., MCHS
- Sept. 26 – Born Learning Parent Workshop, 5:30 p.m., Early Learning Center
- Sept. 27 - Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., MCHS Cafeteria
- Sept. 27 – MCHS Work Seal Follow-up Program, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m., Clay Center
- Sept. 29 – Mapleton Fall Picture Day
- Sept. 30 – Camargo Career Fair 3rd & 4th Grades, MCHS
- Sept. 30 – MSE Career Fair, MCHS
- Sept. 30 – MSE Fall Ball
- Oct. 5 – Camargo Fall Picture Day
- Oct. 12 – MSE SBDM Meeting, 3:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 14 – No School – Court Day/Fall Break**
- **Oct. 17 – No School – Court Day/Fall Break**
- Oct. 19 – Mapleton PTO Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- Oct. 25 – Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., MCHS Cafeteria

Continuous Learning through Professional Literature

Smiling Before Thanksgiving

(Originally titled “Correcting Our Connections”)

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Eric Toshalis (Jobs for the Future) remembers working in a university kitchen that served thousands of undergraduates. He particularly remembers what he and his colleagues said as they carried scalding water or sharp knives through the noisy space: *Behind you*. “Wherever I was in that kitchen and whatever work I was doing,” says Toshalis, “I heard those two words filling the space with a constant message of safety and compassion. As a result, I knew I was seen, trusted, and cared for. That made me feel like a valuable part of a team, it made me work harder, and it made me want to take care of others.”

When he became a teacher, Toshalis heard a lot about caring for students but saw a disconnect between words and deeds. “For example,” he says, “we’d help students by publicly telling them what they were doing wrong, and then later we’d scold them for not requesting more help. Or we’d shower students with praise for their intellect, then tell them we were disappointed when they didn’t persist in challenging tasks that might broadcast their incompetence.”

All this made Toshalis believe that the classroom was not a good place for many students, that “my fellow teachers and I were cooking up forms of care that essentially made our students disappear, made them understand themselves as untrustworthy, and ultimately made them feel unsafe.” He began to think about ways that classrooms could be more like the safe environment he’d experienced in the college kitchen. Some ideas:

- *Being dispassionate doesn’t work*. Teachers are told, *Don’t smile till Thanksgiving, Don’t let them see you sweat* – ways of maintaining control and not letting relationships cloud professional judgment. Toshalis disagrees: “If we want our students to be educated more than manipulated, convinced more than coerced, and even indignant more than indifferent, we have to approach our work with a relational and sometimes passionate orientation. We need to let them see us sweat and smile *way* before Thanksgiving. Students know we’re not robots, so let’s not try to act like

them.” Standing in the hallway during passing time and chatting informally with students is a start.

- *Recognize that schools are not a level playing field.* Toshalis believes the power dynamics in schools often work against the disadvantaged, that most students know perfectly well who is privileged as schools divert resources to those who “deserve” them, ranking and sorting students. “In the end,” he says, “to truly care for students in a way that allows us to claim authentically, ‘I’ve got your back,’ we have to work with youth to recognize and articulate the political realities all of us must shoulder.”

- *Trust has to be earned.* “Given how vulnerable students are to our moods, evaluations, and decisions,” says Toshalis, “students need to determine whether we are worthy of risking interpersonal engagement before they agree to learn from us.” And that takes time.

- *Students’ anger isn’t a threat; it’s an emotion.* “The real threats,” says Toshalis, “are apathy, disengagement, indifference, neglect, cruelty, and violence.” Anger is a thermometer telling us what’s going on inside. *Calm down, lower your voice, take it easy* are ways to tamp down anger. “Doing so cuts us off from rich, nuanced information we might otherwise use to better construct relational connections and pedagogical interventions,” he says. Anger is actually “the tip of the information iceberg.” It’s best to ask, “Tell me why you’re upset right now. I want to know what happened that made you feel this way.”

- *Lecturing isn’t connecting.* “Dialogue is the oxygen of healthy relationships,” says Toshalis. “The give-and-take of perspectives, ideas, needs, and desires is what allows us to know the other and negotiate. The familiar IRE – initiate-respond-evaluate – classroom pattern is the opposite of this. “In the mind of a hypothesis-testing, question-posing, edge-exploring, meaning-making adolescent, this turn-by-turn exchange is unnatural and stultifying. It’s why students are animated and engaged in conversations with peers and why they’re often withdrawn and silent in class.” The solution? Ask open-ended questions. Get students talking to each other. Call on students at random. Move away from the front of the class and sit with students. Talk *with* them. Slow down. Listen.

“Correcting Our Connections” by Eric Toshalis in *Educational Leadership*, September 2016 (Vol. 74, #1, p. 16-20), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2bMjsq1>; Toshalis can be reached at etoshalis@post.harvard.edu.

Be sure to notify the designated person at your school if you have calendar information that should be added to your website calendar.

Thank you so much for your effort and commitment to children. If you have questions about any of the information contained in this issue of The MoCo Monday Minute, please contact me at matthew.thompson@montgomery.kyschools.us.