

# O'MALEY

## Innovation Middle School



### O'Maley Happenings – Thursday, September 28, 2017

What's happening at O'Maley this week???

#### **O'Maley Academy News**

If you are looking for a great after school activity there is still space in Journalism Club (Mondays), American Sign Language (Wednesdays), Drama (Mondays & Wednesdays) and Video Journalism (Thursdays). Please contact Ms. Cousins or Ms. White to sign up [acousins@gloucesterschools.com](mailto:acousins@gloucesterschools.com) or [marywhite@gloucesterschools.com](mailto:marywhite@gloucesterschools.com)

**Early Release** – Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
at 11am. for Staff Professional Day.

#### **Message from the Nurse's Office**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health mandates grade seven heights, weights, vision and hearing screenings. These screenings will begin at O'Maley School Nurse's Office from Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup> – Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>. Please remember to bring eyeglasses or wear contacts if needed. Any questions or concerns please call the nurse's office at 978-281-9847.

**Homework Club** – has started every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 2: -3:15pm.

**Teen Night!** Join the Fun! Cape Ann YMCA – Saturday Night, **September 30<sup>th</sup>** from 6-8pm.

**1<sup>st</sup> PTO meeting** date is Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm in the Library Learning Commons. All are invited!

#### **\*\*\*\* VERY IMPORTANT \*\*\*\***

**Bus Applications - If you haven't paid for your bus pass or filled out an application form yet, please contact Kathy Verga at Transportation 978-282-3001.**

**ALL STUDENTS THAT RIDE THE BUS NEED TO FILL OUT A FORM.**

**Also:** Students are not allowed to go on a bus that they have not been assigned to. Also, no notes from parents will be allowed to ride the bus as a guest. Contact Kathy Verga with any questions 978-282-3001.

#### **Grade Level Guidance –**

Mary White, Gr. 6 – 978-491-6808  
Paula Gray, Gr. 7 – 978-491-6806  
Allison Cousins, Gr.8 – 978-491-6807

**O'Maley Nurse's Office 978-281-9847**

**Gloucester Middle School Coed Cross Country 2017 & Gloucester Middle School Field Hockey** – see schedules on website or Call Julie Smith, Director of Athletics: 978-281-9877 or 978-944-0174

**Absentee and Picture Retakes:**  
are scheduled for Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Term 1 Progress Reports** – will go home with students on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>.

**PAGE 2** - Please scroll down to page two of O'Maley Happenings to see the first in a series of occasional articles that will be written by volunteer members of the O'Maley School community.

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### **Making the Grade**

By: Jeff Strong, Assistant Principal

*It is my pleasure to pen the first paper on “Page Two” of our weekly O'Maley Happenings.*

Traditions are an important part of just about any institution. They provide a certain sense of comfort and give us all something to look forward to. However, in the world of education, there is one tradition that has outlived its usefulness. Anyone who has gone to school in the last century or so, has received a grade on a 100 point scale. We all know that scores in the 90's represent A's and the 80's represent B's and so on. When you think about the scale as a whole, and that there are 101 possible outcomes, with about two-thirds of the scale representing scores in the failing range, {at O'Maley 65 is the lowest passing score} I am not sure this is fair to students, and overcoming a low score or two creates a worrisome burden for our kids.

Many books and in fact entire college courses have been authored on the topic of assessing students. There are many experts in this field. Rick Wormeli is perhaps my favorite and after attending his two-day workshop last spring I became even more passionate on this subject. His definition of grading goes something like this, “The purpose of grading is to report on what a student knows or can do within the given content area.” Herein lies the problem. Let's say over the course of a term, which runs for about nine weeks, your son or daughter earns an 85 in English class. Does this mean they understand 85 percent of the varied content covered during this term? Or does it mean they completed 85 percent of the work assigned? Is it some combination? And what's the true difference between an 84, 85 and 86? Assuming they mastered 85 percent of the content, what exactly did s/he struggle with? How will you know, or more importantly how will the student know what to focus on in order to improve?

Over the course of this school year, I hope to work with our staff to guide them toward what's called a Standards Based Grading system. This is similar to what our elementary schools use, but tailored to the needs of a middle school, so many parents might be accepting of this potential change. A report card that on a scale of 1-4 measures the progress a student has made on a specific standard will produce a better sense of how well your child can write an effective topic sentence, or identify the major tenets of the government of Ancient Greece for example. In other words, a four will let you know they have mastered using the scientific formula to answer some engineering problem. If they get a three, you'll know they are almost there. A two might mean they have a basic or developing understanding, whereas a one will show they are building the foundation for learning and maybe a zero means there is no evidence yet. Based on the data, we can convert back to traditional if required for certain high school admission needs.

Traditions are sometimes hard to let go, but in this case a more modern approach to assessing will be beneficial to the overall learning process. To me, the learning is more important than the old fashioned grade at the top of the page. Parents are welcome to email comments on this topic to [jstrong@gloucesterschools.com](mailto:jstrong@gloucesterschools.com)