



Cloonan Middle School

11 West North Street / Stamford, CT 06902 (203) 977-4544 / FAX (203) 977- 4867

Principal David Rudolph
Assistant Principal Laureen Mody
Assistant Principal David Tate

September 02, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome to the new school year. We write to inform you of some changes we have made to improve instruction, as well as to clear up some misconceptions. First, you are probably aware of the Middle School Transformation process that has been initiated in grade six throughout the district. This letter is not about that, but about what is happening for our seventh and eighth graders.

As we reviewed the CMT scores, other standardized test results and students final grades we realized that many more students had performed at high levels. Beginning with grade eight, the results indicated that large numbers of students had qualified for algebra as well as for our traditional zero level groups. These numbers were the largest we have seen in years. In keeping with the high expectations we have for our students while maintaining appropriate class sizes, we created multiple sections of zero groups. To conform to the computerized scheduling system introduced this year we created a two-digit code for each section and level – 01, 02, 11 and 22. In creating the new groups we looked at the numbers of students, the test scores, and also at the particular teaching and learning styles. We sought to make the best match between teachers and students in order to move ahead on what will be very challenging material.

We are now aware that this has led to some confusion about the zero groups being different. We wish to make it clear that both groups are taking algebra; both will have the same exams and benchmarks; both are taking the 0 level coursework, pacing and have the same expectations for their English / language arts and social studies classes. We did move a number of students up and because we needed to make two new top groups we did remix some of the students. All of this was done in both houses. Similar changes have been made in grade seven.

We have made one other change based upon feedback we have received from parents and students. This year, the essentials classes (art, music, physical education) and the academic enrichment classes (language arts, math, and world languages) are being taught in mixed house groups. For the first time, students in the Blue and Gold Houses will have the opportunity to interact with more students in places other than just the cafeteria, and hopefully make some new friends as they prepare for the transition to high school.

We recognize that these are significant changes. However they are completely unrelated to the transformation occurring in grade six. Still, we acknowledge that students and families would have been better served had we communicated these changes earlier. We remain committed to ever higher levels of achievement and to doing our best to work in closer partnership with our families, and community to provide the most effective education possible for all our students. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely

David Rudolph

Laureen Mody

David Tate