MIDDLEFORK PRINCIPAL SEARCH UPDATE
On February 7, 2020, two interview teams comprised of D29 Board of Education members, parents, and staff interviewed a group of incredibly talented administrators for the Middlefork School Principal position. Based on feedback from these interview committees, we have invited a subset of candidates back for a “finalist” interview to be held on February 18, 2020. The finalist interview committee will be comprised of an entirely new group of D29 Board of Education members, parents, and staff. We hope to recommend a candidate for Board approval at the March 2020 Board meeting.

FROM THE D29 BOARD OF EDUCATION
During closed session at the Board’s February 11 meeting, the Board discussed with its attorneys’ initial findings related to the investigation into the employment of a vendor custodian who is accused of taping individuals at Sunset Ridge School. Based on that discussion, the School District’s attorneys will be reviewing a few additional matters and providing recommendations for responsive action to the Board. The Board expects to receive those recommendations no later than the end of the month, enabling the Board to take public action at a special meeting to be scheduled prior to the March 11 Board meeting.

The Board is mindful that the community is seeking timely action and the Board is committed to meeting that goal.

As the Board president stated Tuesday night, we appreciate the community’s patience and faith in us as we complete a thorough investigation.

The Board will continue to move forward in a thoughtful and deliberative manner in the best interest of the school community.

FROM THE D29 PTO
It’s already the time of year to start thinking about next year! The PTO is currently putting together the slate of officers and committee members for the 2020-2021 school year. If you currently serve in a PTO role and would like to retain your spot next year, OR if you are looking to get involved and would like to talk about the opportunities available, please reach out to Erica Marinello for more information. As always, anyone is welcome to attend the monthly meetings! The committee members and chairs are the folks who organize our book fairs, coordinate the
lunchroom volunteers, plan our special author visits and events, host teacher appreciation week, plant flowers in the Middlefork Planters each winter and spring. So on and so forth. There are ongoing roles, and one-off roles...truly, something for everybody! erica.marinello@gmail.com

CORONA VIRUS AND DISINFECTING SCHOOLS
The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued a guidance document regarding the recent outbreak of the Corona Virus. You can read the entire document at (dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus). In the meantime, they are recommending the following practices:

· Avoid non-essential travel to China. CDC has issued a Level 3 Travel Alert.
· Stay informed. Visit CDC, IDPH, WHO websites and listen to the news.
· Practice the 3 C’s:
  – Cover coughs and sneezes with elbow or tissue
  – Clean hands frequently with warm water and soap
  – Contain your germs by staying home when sick

Since we are in the height of the flu season, our custodians will be performing a deep cleaning and disinfecting at both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge schools on Monday February 17, 2020.

Sincerely,
Edward J. Stange, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

MIDDLEFORK HEADLINES

CONFERENCE DAY: Thank you for your support today. We always enjoy discussing your children’s progress with you!

KINDERGARTEN MATH NIGHT is this Thursday, 2/20 at 6:30 p.m. If you did not return your participation slip and do plan to attend with your child, please email the classroom teacher. Thank you!

SPREADING THE LOVE: Thanks to Mrs. Varughese for decorating the Middlefork office and hallways with hearts adorned with the word "love" in the different languages represented at Middlefork School.

MIDDLEFORK SERVICE NIGHT IS WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11! The wonderful evening event begins at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11. Students and their parents/caregivers rotate among service stations to pack breakfast bags for the homeless, make bracelets for sick children, create adoption bandannas for shelter pets, and color cards of appreciation for service men and women. Look for more information from the Dedicated Dolphins and mark your calendars for 3/11/20, 6:30 p.m. @ Middlefork School!
OFFICER FRIENDLY from the NOrthfield Police Department visited classrooms this past Monday to educate students on poison safety. Class discussions focused on how ordinary cleaning supplies, grooming products, and medications present in the home, if used incorrectly, can be harmful. Your child should have brought home a Poison Prevention educational coloring and activity book - discussing it with him or her would be a wonderful review and reinforcement of Officer Friendly’s important message!

DOLPHIN WAVES MEDIA is well under way and the students have begun to film their first stories... An exciting broadcast is coming soon! This is a reminder to participants that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 2/18, due to the holiday on Monday.

LEARNING CENTER NEWS: Monarch Award and Caldecott Honor winning author and illustrator Aaron Reynolds will visit Middlefork School on March 2! If you would like to purchase books to be signed by Aaron for your child, please send order forms to Mrs. Johnson by February 25. Order forms went home with students this week. Click here for more information about Aaron Reynolds and our author visit.

MIDDLEFORK CLUB DE ESPAÑOL held its first meeting this week. The goals for the Club include: providing students who enjoy learning about Spanish language and culture an opportunity to continue their journey; and celebrating language learning and how it nurtures our understanding of other cultures. The first meeting wrapped up by discussing how some Spanish-speaking countries celebrate Valentine's Day and students created decorative Valentines en español for friends and family members. If you are interested in joining the Spanish Club, please go to this link. There are still spaces available for both sessions!

COMING UP:
2/20 Kindergarten Family Math Night, 6:30 p.m.
2/21 February Birthday Lunch
2/28 August ½ Birthday Lunch

MIDDLEFORK NEWS:
http://www.sunsetridge29.org/schools/middlefork_school___k-3

SUNSET RIDGE HEADLINES

SOCIAL MEDIA: Over the past week, some 8th grade students and District 29 staff have experienced some inappropriate, hurtful and targeted attacks on social media outside of school. We are unaware of the authors of the accounts, but we applaud the efforts of the many students that have voiced objection to the posts and tried to get the anonymous social media accounts shut down. One has been shut down, but there are others.
Please take time to discuss with your child appropriate online behavior, the impact posts and comments can have on others - even inadvertently, and how to handle an account that is directly provocative or pejorative.

**CONFERENCE FEEDBACK:** Thank you to everyone who joined us for conferences today. We hope you enjoyed the hearts and love spread by our EL team! If you attended a student-led conference (5th - 8th grade), please complete this brief survey so we can gather your feedback: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3SFQSDV

**RAK WEEK:** Random Acts of Kindness Week is next week! From writing cards of gratitude to creating videos demonstrating kindness to building each other up through compliments and connections, all Sunset Ridge students will be participating in this special week through a variety of grade-level activities. Additionally, SRS will be having its inaugural Pink Shirt Day on **February 19th**; this international movement is all about anti-bullying and choosing kindness, so please encourage your child to wear pink this Wednesday. This upcoming week is kind of a big deal, so please ask your child how he/she is helping to spread kindness!

**FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE:** It is our typical Winter Week of Illness! This week in the health office we have colds and coughs. A case of Influenza A in Grade 4, 6 and 7. [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/types.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/types.htm). A little info on the Coronavirus (not at SRS). [http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus](http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus) Please continue to keep your child home if they have a fever or do not feel well enough to attend school. Report the nature of your child’s illness to help us track illness trends. Encourage hand washing and cover your cough with your elbow.

Stay healthy,
Linda

**WE NEED YOUR HELP:** Sunset Ridge is partnering with Cradles to Crayons to collect new and like-new SNEAKERS and RAIN COATS as a part of the Family and Children Service League. We will begin collecting donations from each grade level starting on **February 14th**. Our donations of new and like-new children’s items will support Cradles to Crayons' efforts to provide children living in homeless or low-income situations with the essentials they need to thrive. Cradles to Crayons supplies these items free of charge by engaging and connecting communities that have with communities that need.

**DESIGN STUDIO:** Check out the latest from the Design Studio!: [https://sunsetridge29.org/schools/sunset_ridge_school__4-8_/teacher_pages/albright__kim/monthly_newsletter](https://sunsetridge29.org/schools/sunset_ridge_school__4-8_/teacher_pages/albright__kim/monthly_newsletter)

**FROM THE LC:** Check out these updates from the Sunset Ridge Learning Center: [https://www.smore.com/3cr0j](https://www.smore.com/3cr0j)
BOOK FAIR: The Sunset Ridge Book fair is coming up! Mark your calendars for **March 4th and 5th**! The Book Fair will be located in the Sunset Ridge Learning Center and will be open from 9am-7pm on Wednesday, March 4 and from 9am-8pm on Thursday, March 5. There is also a 4th grade concert the night of March 5, so please be sure to stop by the Book Fair before the concert! Ms. Gray will be distributing information to all students later in February. If you have any questions, please contact Karen Halverson (khalverson85@yahoo.com) or Lauren Gray (grayl@sunsetridge29.org). We’re looking forward to an amazing Book Fair!

INTERESTING ARTICLE: There was an interesting article in the *Chicago Tribune* this week about middle school friendships. Take a look at the end of the Friday News.

UPCOMING AT SRS:

2/17
NO SCHOOL

2/18
Boys’ Volleyball @ Marie Murphy

2/19
**Pink Shirt Day!**
Boys’ Volleyball @ Washburne
SELPAC - 7:00 pm

2/20
Boys’ Volleyball vs. Washburne Green @SRS

2/22
Robotics Competition at Hillside

2/25
Boys’ Volleyball vs. Glencoe @SRS

2/26
Parent Connections @ SRS - 8:45 am
Boys’ Volleyball @ CHA

SUNSET RIDGE NEWS:
http://sunsetridge29.org/schools/sunset_ridge_school__4-8_
“Middle school is about lunch.”

That line, in an essay full of thought-provoking lines, jumped out at me. I was reading “The outsize influence of your middle-school friends,” in the Atlantic, adapted from Lydia Denworth’s new book, “Friendship: The Evolution, Biology, and Extraordinary Power of Life’s Fundamental Bond.” My kids are in fifth and eighth grades — both grades considered middle school in Chicago Public Schools — and the article jumped out at me as both parenting guidance and, maybe, insight into why our own middle school relationships can loom large, even decades later.

I remember attending a workshop for moms and middle school daughters two years ago, organized by author and educator Michelle Icard, which led attendees through various exercises aimed at keeping us connected during the complicated years ahead. At one point, Icard asked the moms to whisper in our daughters’ ears the name of someone who made our lives miserable during middle school. None of us hesitated. Then she asked us to whisper the names of someone who made our lives wonderful during middle school. Again, no hesitation. Her point was to remind us what a lasting impact middle school can have and, just as important, to show our daughters that they hold an incredible amount of power during those middle school years — power to lift someone up or tear someone down, in ways that person will remember for years. Maybe a lifetime.
Denworth’s work explores some of the science behind that power. It’s a fascinating read for anyone with middle schoolers, and may help guide some of the parenting questions that pop up during this age: Should I let her skip her brother’s game to hang out with friends? Should we invite his friend on vacation or insist on family-only time? How big of a deal is it that she hasn’t found a friend group?

“Middle school brings the beginnings of puberty for some, first crushes for many, and a shift from child to teenager for all,” Denworth writes. “It brings higher levels of academics. But if you want to know whether your child is going to be happy or miserable, confident or anxious, being a fly on the wall at lunch would probably tell you a lot.”

Children, she writes, are entering a period of maximum concern over acceptance, rejection and how they’re perceived. And friendships have real, measurable power to be a port in that storm.

Denworth interviewed Jaana Juvonen, a developmental psychologist at the University of California at Los Angeles, who researched thousands of middle school students over three years. Juvonen compared middle school friendships to the attachment relationship children initially have with their parents.

“Too often educators and parents fail to appreciate the potential upside of these strong ties,” Denworth writes. “Teachers often separate friends, whose banter can be disruptive in the classroom. Yet when researchers record student conversations during class, there is evidence that while kids are problem solving or working together, students collaborate more effectively with their friends.”
In that vein, “it’s really interesting that we as adults in the society often regard friendships more as a nuisance and a distraction rather than give them the value that they really deserve,” Juvonen told Denworth. Kids who identified themselves as friendless — boys outnumbered girls in this category 2 to 1 — were at a higher risk for anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

“It wasn’t friendlessness alone that created problems,” Denworth writes, “it was the resulting sense of threat.” Those children know that if bullying or other social problems come their way, they’ll have no one to serve as a buffer and help them through. Friends are a life jacket of sorts.

For younger children, parents can serve that role. Denworth cited a University of Wisconsin study that subjected girls ages 7 to 12 to a series of stress-inducing tests and then measured the girls’ levels of stress hormones such as cortisol, and oxytocin, which plays a role in social bonding. Then they split the girls into three groups: one group who received hugs and support from their moms after the testing, one group who got to talk to their moms on the phone after the testing, and one group who had no contact with their moms immediately afterward.

“All three groups experienced a rise in cortisol after taking the tests, but those who interacted with their mothers afterward saw a reduction in those levels — physical touch sped up the process, but voice was enough to have an effect,” Denworth writes. “Those who had no contact with their mothers still showed higher levels of cortisol one hour after the stress test.”
But studies that analyze brains of kids ages 11 to 17, Denworth reports, show the power of a parent’s presence starts to fade. Kids need their peers to help them feel calm and safe.

“It seems logical that when parents no longer serve as social buffers, friends might take over, given how important friends are to teenagers,” she writes. “A 2011 study found evidence for exactly that in 11- and 12-year-olds. The children regularly recorded how they felt about themselves and their experiences throughout their days, and they recorded who was with them. Their cortisol levels were measured as well. Having a best friend present during an experience significantly buffered any negative feelings, lowering cortisol levels and boosting a sense of self-worth.”

Fascinating stuff. And maybe a dose of comfort when your kid, who used to want nothing more than your undivided attention, suddenly isn’t all that interested in squeezing you onto the social calendar. It’s not just normal; it’s science.

Join the Heidi Stevens Balancing Act Facebook group, where she continues the conversation around her columns and hosts occasional live chats.

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