

# DRIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Marcellus Central School District

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*Dedicated and Motivated to Succeed*

January 26, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

It is hard to believe we are half way through the school year. The rest of the year will go equally as fast. The habits students set between now and the end of the year are very important. We will be visiting classrooms in the next couple of weeks to offer suggestions and strategies, as well as encouragement for a successful second half of the year. A good habit for students in grades 6-8 is to **check grades in Schoology** on a regular basis so that you can see how students are doing throughout the marking period.

Soon we will be celebrating **PARP (People as Reading Partners)**. Reading is a skill that helps students be successful in all academic areas. The more we read, the more prepared we are to face the challenges of school, work and the future! During PARP, we bring more attention to reading, however, it is something we should be encouraging students to do each and every day. We are asking parents to **have your child read 20-30 minutes every night** after they complete their homework. Starting this habit now will pay dividends in the future.

In April we will begin our testing schedule for the **New York State Assessments**. Our general schedule for testing is on the back side of this letter. This year our students will complete the assessments on their Chromebooks. Last year we used the Chromebooks on some tests as we began the transition to full computer based testing. The New York State Education Department expects a full computer based testing implementation by the year 2019. We are ahead of this deadline and will be fully computer based this school year. Students have been practicing and will continue to practice with the computer based testing format in their classrooms. Please note that in an effort to continue to improve the assessment program and respond to feedback from the community, the New York State Education Department has shortened the assessments for ELA and Math from 3 days to 2 days.

On a final note, this is also a good time to take inventory of items that may have been lost at school. We have a number of clothing articles, lunch boxes, and other items in our **lost and found**. We will be cleaning out our lost and found before February break. You can view a picture of lost and found items on our website slide show.

We have additional information included in this mailing regarding the relocation of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in February, placement for 4-6 grade for next year, scheduling and acceleration. Please be sure to take a look at all enclosures.

We would continue to encourage you to check our website regularly for updates and pertinent school information.

With your continued support we hope to have a strong second semester!

Sincerely,

Janet O'Mara  
Principal

Jean Sharlow  
Assistant Principal

### ***Some additional thoughts about state testing***

Over the last few years there has been much controversy regarding our 3-8th grade state testing program. While parents, students and even educators share in the concerns, it is important to recognize that the State Education Department has been listening to us and making improvements to the assessment system. While we believe there is still room for improvement, we are beginning to see changes occurring in an effort to create a more meaningful and valid assessment program and we are confident that changes will continue to be made. Recent changes that have been made:

- ✓ Greater involvement of educators in the test development process
- ✓ Fewer questions which has resulted in a 2 day exam period instead of 3 days
- ✓ Assessments are no longer timed – students have as much time as they need
- ✓ Moratorium on the use of the exam scores for teacher/principal evaluation
- ✓ Release of a majority of test questions for educator review and professional development

It is important to note that aside from the controversy, there is value in the assessments. Just like our assessments that take place throughout the year in the classroom, our state assessments are used to measure growth, progress and mastery of content and more importantly, skills that are vital to students' future success in school.

While it is certainly a parent's right to choose to opt their child out of the state assessments, they remain a required component of our educational system. While 3-8 assessments have no bearing on one's ability to graduate, having the information relative to a students' progress prior to entering high school allows us to provide the support necessary to insure their success. In addition, providing students with opportunities to experience assessments of this type prior to the time when they will have bearing on a student's ability to graduate from high school, is an important process.

In making your decision as to whether or not you may opt your child out of assessments, we would ask that you take this information into consideration. It is our hope that if you have opted out of assessments in the past that you will consider allowing your child participate this year. As a district, we make every effort to provide a stress free testing atmosphere and the support necessary to assist our students in persevering through a challenge. In the event that you still wish to opt your child out of the 3-8 assessments, we ask that you inform us in writing by . This advanced notice allows us to be prepared and eliminates any confusion once testing begins. Indicating which tests your child will not be taking eliminates the need for multiple notifications on your part.

If you wish to discuss anything further, we welcome the opportunity. Please reach out at your convenience.

### **Our 2018 New York State Testing Schedule:**

Grades 5-6 English Language Arts	Wednesday, April 11 <sup>th</sup> – Thursday, April 12 <sup>th</sup> at 9:15
Grades 7-8 English Language Arts	Wednesday, April 11 <sup>th</sup> – Thursday, April 12 <sup>th</sup> at 8:00
Grades 5-6 Mathematics	Tuesday, May 1 <sup>st</sup> – Wednesday, May 2 <sup>nd</sup> at 9:15
Grades 7-8 Mathematics	Tuesday, May 1 <sup>st</sup> – Wednesday, May 2 <sup>nd</sup> at 8:00
Grade 8 Science Performance	Wednesday May 23 <sup>rd</sup> – Thursday May 24 <sup>th</sup> (during science class)
Grade 8 Science Written	Monday June 4 <sup>th</sup> – periods 1-3
Algebra 1 Regents Exam**	Tuesday, June 12 <sup>th</sup> at 12:15
Living Environment Regents Exam**	Wednesday, June 13 <sup>th</sup> at 12:15