



# Berlin Middle School

AUGUST 2011

## CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING @ BMS

### NO BULLYING @ BMS

**YOU ASKED; I ANSWERED.** A new multi-layered approach, which will lead to less acts of bullying and bystanding, will be kicking off the new school year at Berlin Middle School. Last year, students and parents reported that the current discipline policy regarding bullying at BMS was not strict enough, nor did it do the job of eradicating bullying from the school community.



**AN IMPROVED MULTI-LAYERED APPROACH** will include more immediate responsiveness by teachers & staff, team leaders, and administration. Non-tolerance of bullying behaviors will be instituted with stricter communications home and tighter accountability for students and parents. Bullies will be held accountable by journaling and providing answers which will allow for a more reflective process in order to better understand how and why they bully; how their bullying destroys the fabric of a school community. Very importantly, bullies will learn quickly that there are tougher consequences if they don't stop.

**AS YOU WALK THROUGH BMS** you'll start to notice new signage, which helps to promote a safety net around all of BMS's students, your children. I encourage parents to call me at 658-2515 ext. 204 or e-mail me at ([jbreh@berlincentral.org](mailto:jbreh@berlincentral.org)) if they would like more information on this new and improved initiative at Berlin Middle School.

### PBIS KICKS-OFF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Last year's 6th—8th grade classes had their first dose of PBIS—**Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**. PBIS is a positive approach to discipline where students are encouraged to do the right thing and are then rewarded for their integrity. Although intrinsic motivation is the goal, we realized that many students needed to know about behaving in different (i.e. classrooms, cafeteria, the start of the new school) have PBIS training in the assembly and review *CoolTools* school community goes over familiarization of high behavior learn or re-learn what they already ent areas in and around the building locker room, sportsfields, etc. ) At year, 6th graders (all of whom did not elementary school) will meet for an as-for the hallway while the rest of the other locations and scenarios. This ioral expectations builds upon knowledge your child acquired while at BES—when they learned about *OLWEUS bullying prevention* and *Peaceful School bus*. **Positive interactions with adults and peers=greater connection to school** and we are excited about the continuation of PBIS at Berlin Middle School.

- BE RESPECTFUL**
- BE RESPONSIBLE**
- BE SAFE**
- BE READY TO LEARN**

#### Inside this issue:

Math Lab	2
GrowLab & Butterfly Hatcheries	2
Middle School News-letter Goes Green	2
Shorter Lunch = Healthier/Happier Kids	3
Games/Recess Offered	3
Band/Chorus @ BMS	3
Suggested Donations for GrowLabs	4

### CALENDAR

AUGUST 24 @ 6:30PM  
6TH GRADE  
LOCKER NIGHT

SEPTEMBER 6  
1ST DAY OF SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 19 @ 6PM  
PTO MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21 @ 6-8PM  
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL  
OPEN HOUSE!!!

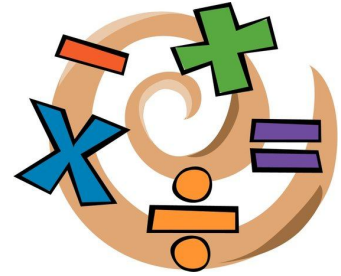
SEPTEMBER 23  
SCHOOL PICTURES

SEPTEMBER 30  
PBIS KICKOFF FOR STUDENTS

# MATH LAB

**A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY** is being brought to all middle school students starting in September. In addition to the grade level math class, students will now be introduced to Math Lab—an exciting new approach to increase engagement in math studies. The math team at BMS holds one central belief—that all students can learn math no matter what experience or aptitude he or she has. Face it, a classroom is devised of all different types of learners from unique life experiences. It would be unfair to ask every student to figure out one method of learning math. That's where Math Lab comes in. It's unique design is based on the individual needs of your child, where teachers can offer your child a deeper level of understanding of discrete concepts they need to be

successful. Some children are very good at conceptualizing material (i.e.  $y=mx+b$  or  $a^2+b^2=c^2$ ) while others may have a better grasp of representational graphs, charts, pictures, and concrete manipulatives. No matter what your child's level of understanding is, Math Lab teachers are working hard creating new differentiated curriculum that will enhance your child's overall mastery of math concepts. I look forward to further detailing this new and exciting course as the year develops.



# GROWLABS AND BUTTERFLY HATCHERIES

**BUILDING ON THE KNOWLEDGE** your child has acquired regarding life cycles in the elementary school, the middle school now has 3 GrowLabs and 3 butterfly hatcheries (one for each grade level). One of the most wonderful reasons to live, work, and go to school in the Berlin Central School District is the immediate connection to nature. Throughout the year, many families enjoy biking, hiking, responsible hunting and fishing. Having an appreciation for the stewardship of our natural environment is a wonderful quality to pass-on to our children. Now, they can learn how to grow life—butterflies, fruits, vegetables, and flowers. There's certainly something to be said for those who know how to grow their own food and I know the

research supporting hand-on learning activities for middle schoolers is staggering. Faculty and staff are getting very excited developing curriculum, pre-planning field trips, and even supporting service learning and fundraising for middle school students. The last page of this newsletter gives possible donations that will support this project. I encourage you to go through your garden shed or your patio as the season draws to a close and donate some of the needed items. Our students and teachers kindly thank you.

**BUTTERFLIES ARE  
SELF-PROPELLED  
FLOWERS.**  
*R.H. Heinlein*

# MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER GOES GREEN

**WORKING IN TANDEM WITH OUR GROWLAB AND BUTTERFLY HATCHERY INITIATIVES**, the middle school is continuing to devise creative ways to **SUPPORT NATURAL & GREEN INITIATIVES** in our school. One of the best ways to go green is to go paperless. A letter will go home with your child in the first week of school offering you to opt-out of paper (hardcopy) newsletters. You may still receive a paper copy, if you wish. Team leaders will be collecting parent/guardian e-mails which will have an opt-out section as well.

The monthly newsletter will still be posted on the website and I encourage you to check it for the most up-to-date information. Other correspondence from teams or the principal will come through your e-mail account. Don't worry, BMS still believes in a good ol' fashion phone call as well, so we'll be in touch—no worries there! The *Home—to—School* connection is a must for securing and maintaining your child's success during these very important years of their formative development.

# SHORTER LUNCH = HEALTHIER/HAPPIER KIDS



**LAST SCHOOL YEAR**, lunches were shortened from 42 minute periods to 30 minutes. Our own internal data has shown that even 30 minutes was too long to have a well-supervised, yet unstructured lunch period. Starting this September middle school lunches will be moving from 30 minutes to 20 minutes. Correlations exist which show that when students had longer than 20 minutes to eat, they started to become rambunctious and get into trouble. *“Well, what about the long lunch lines? Is my child even going to be able to eat?”* The answer is...of course! Cutting the time in half allows us to have 4 lunches instead of 3, which will decrease the number of students in each lunch and shorten the lunch line from what it used to be. Where we had 60+ students in a lunch before, we now will have about 40. **Also this year, student representatives from the middle school**

**will be invited to become members of Berlin Middle/High School’s Cafeteria Council. This committee meets semi-regularly throughout the year and discusses the lunch program—what’s working and what isn’t and then makes decisions based on what’s best for the school community.**

## Games/Recess Offered

Another area to be addressed for the upcoming school year was the time our students, your kids, had accessible to actively engage with their peers. Granted, the small school setting allows them to see each other quite frequently, but a new 20 minute game/recess time is now scheduled in for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. During this time students can enjoy playing board games, either alone or with a peer, which center on building math skills and literacy fundamentals. Many of the most current games are wonderful resources for building a student’s capacity for critical thinking and socialization. This time may also be spent working or playing

outside, weather permitting, in order for our students to gear up for the rest of their day’s classes. The benefits supporting the need for kids to be physically active and/or having positive interaction time with their peers will be readily seen in the first quarter alone. I look forward to seeing how this minor change in the schedule will provide for increased academic achievement and decreases in negative behaviors throughout the school day. *(Video games and playing cards will not be options for this game period—a full list of board games being offered is available upon request.*

## Band/Chorus @ BMS

Students in the middle school have the option to take instrumental band with Mr. Byron or Chorus with Mrs. Kirsch. Both teachers have high expectations and are ready to take your young performers to the next level. Although some students may not have taken band and/or chorus in elementary school, they are certainly more than welcome to join in middle school. Currently, we have a 6th grade band and chorus and a combined 7th+8th grade band and chorus.

Here are some guiding practices to ensure that your musician stays on track:

- ◆ ***Practice nightly and with tons of effort.***
- ◆ ***Know when your lesson is, be prepared, go to it, and be on time.***
- ◆ ***Make sure your work is completed for the class you are being permitted to miss or make it up in a timely***

***Performances are a must. Participate with pride. You’ve worked hard and others are depending on you.***

## Berlin Middle School

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**SPIRIT  
INTEGRITY  
ENVIRONMENT**

**MOUNTAINEER  
PRIDE!**



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE ITEMS TO THE **GROW-  
LAB** INITIATIVE @ BMS, WE WOULD  
KINDLY APPRECIATE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

HEALTHY SEEDS                      GARDEN TOOLS  
POTTING SOIL    DECORATIVE POTS  
YOGURT CONTAINERS FOR SEEDLINGS  
VARIOUS SIZED CONTAINERS FOR REPOTTING

Thank you, in advance, for your generosity in helping us *cultivate* this project. Volunteering is also a great option. If you have experience and expertise or have little to none, but would like to help our middle schoolers, contact a team leader:

6th Grade—Kim Bugbee @  
[kbugbee@berlincentral.org](mailto:kbugbee@berlincentral.org)

7th Grade—Audrey Vanderhoef @  
[avanderhoef@berlincentral.org](mailto:avanderhoef@berlincentral.org)

8th Grade—Alicia Beisler @  
[abeisler@berlincentral.org](mailto:abeisler@berlincentral.org)

## WHAT DOES BEING A MOUNTAINEER MEAN TO YOU?

Here at Berlin Middle School, we believe in 3 essentials—**spirit, integrity**, and the **environment**. Basically, we want our students to **exude positive energy** when doing everything from homework to playing a favorite sport, showing **respect, responsibility**, commitment to **safety**, and **readiness to learn** (one could say this is the 'how' of we do at BMS), and finally showing an **appreciation for our natural environment** (which includes trees, land, and/or water, but also includes the very day-to-day interactions with our peers, teachers, and parents, which is so important). We have found that when we raise the expectations of our students and follow-through, they never let us down!

**GO MOUNTAINEERS!**

So, now you know what being a Mountaineer means to us; what does it mean to you and your family?  
E-mail your responses to me at:

[jbreh@berlincentral.org](mailto:jbreh@berlincentral.org)

Entries will be selected to be included in upcoming monthly editions of **CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE**.