

THOREAU MATTERS



Thoreau Matters is published every two weeks by the Thoreau Administration and the PTA to inform the community of important information about school life at Thoreau Middle School.

Volume 5 Issue 3

September 28, 2017

MESSAGE FROM MR. AZIMI

Dear Thoreau Community:

As many of you are aware, Thoreau last year moved to a block schedule format to structure our instructional day to be more in alignment with how high schools and elementary schools operate. We refined the schedule this year after I spent time in the spring engaging the faculty and hundreds of students about ways we could further improve the way our schedule is structured.

Feedback from faculty and students included being purposeful with our all-period days known as Plaid Days. Plaid Days last year occurred mostly on Mondays. We adjusted the schedule this year to be more strategic with our Plaid Days so that they now occur on the first and last days of school, the last day of each quarter, and the day before Thanksgiving break. Teachers and students shared with me their feelings that the rotating block schedule (our Blue Days and Gold Days) was more productive than having a weekly Plaid Day. As a reminder, you can find our year-long Blue/Gold calendar [here](#).

Other feedback I received this past spring included having more time for our Steps to Success (StS) lessons. StS is our multi-year initiative focusing on the executive functioning skills of planning, time management and organization. Our StS lessons last year occurred on our Plaid Days and the lessons took place in 26-minute periods. We learned that 26 minutes was not enough for students and teachers to dive deeply into the lessons. As a result, we adjusted our schedule so that StS lessons occur twice a month now during our 40-minute Eagle Time period. The intent with increasing the time allotment is to provide students the opportunity to process and apply the skills they are learning.

With these tweaks to our 2017-2018 schedule, it is my expectation that these refinements will set up our students for improved learning as well as even better preparation for when they go off to high school.

Sincerely,
Yusef Azimi



Math teacher Mersedeh Darvish (left) and ESOL teacher Erika Smith (right) planning together.



English teacher Jonathan Katz working with two students during Eagle Time.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Walk to School Day - Wednesday, October 4th

Columbus Day Holiday - Monday, October 9th

Fall Pictures - Thursday and Friday, October 19th and 20th

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Walk to School Day



Wednesday, October 4th is National Walk to School Day. The first 100 walkers or bike riders to arrive at Thoreau on October 4th will receive a sneaker keychain from Fairfax County's Safe Routes to School program.

Why walk or bike? It's fun! Remember the thrill of riding a bike for the first time or walking to school that first day? There's a feeling of joy, independence and a sense of adventure that doesn't fade.

Walking and biking to school enables children to incorporate the regular physical activity they need each day while also forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Regular physical activity helps children build strong bones, muscles and joints, and it decreases the risk of obesity.

The whole community benefits from efforts to enable and encourage more children to walk or bike to school safely. Benefits include less traffic congestion and stronger sense of community.



Thoreau students walking and biking to school.

Credit Exam for World Languages

The Credit Exam for World Languages is designed to assess students' native language proficiency and enable them to earn one or two credits toward fulfilling the world languages requirement for the Advanced Studies Diploma.

The 2017 Credit Exam for World Languages will be administered on November 1st, 2nd, and 8th. Twenty-six languages will be included: American Sign Language, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali/Bangla, Chinese/Mandarin, Farsi/Persian, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Pashto, Punjabi, Russian, Sanskrit/Sanskritam, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog/Pilipino, Tamil, Telugu, Tigrinia, Twi, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

School counselors will register students at their individual schools. Registration opened on Monday, September 11th and will close on Wednesday, October 11th at 4:00PM. Late registrations will not be accepted. Credit exam information can be accessed [here](#). For more information, parents can contact their child's counselor.

Credit exam dates, times and testing sites:

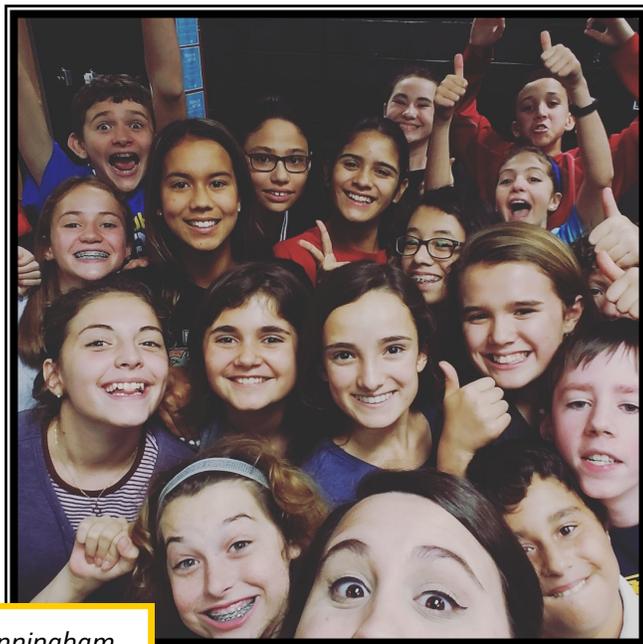
- Madison HS - Wednesday, November 1st at 4:00 PM
- West Potomac HS - Thursday, November 2nd at 4:00 PM
- Falls Church HS - Wednesday, November 8th at 4:00 PM

Fall Theatre Expo

The Fall Theatre Expo is a fun-filled day of workshops that draws middle school students from across the country to learn from theatre professionals. This year's Expo is at Mark Twain Middle School on Saturday, October 28th from 9:00AM to 2:00PM.

The cost of the event is \$15.00 per student. Students choose up to four workshops to attend during the day.

If you are interested in attending, please contact [Ms. Virginia Cunningham](#), Thoreau theatre arts teacher. Signed permission forms, registration forms, completed emergency care cards and the \$15.00 registration fee are due no later than Friday, October 6th. Checks can be made payable to Thoreau Middle School. The workshop registration fee is non-refundable once paid and students are responsible for their own transportation.



Advanced Theatre students with Ms. Cunningham.

After-School Program Reminders

Thoreau's after-school program is off to a great start! Students are highly encouraged to stay after-school to make-up work, obtain additional help, or participate in an after-school activity or club.

Activity Sessions: Late buses run on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Students sign-in for each after-school activity upon arrival at that activity. The after-school program is divided into sessions. Session 1 runs from 2:25-3:10PM, Session 2 from 3:20-4:05PM, and Session 3 at 4:10PM. Late buses depart Thoreau between 4:30PM and 5:00PM. Activities on Tuesdays and Fridays require parent pick-up or students will need to live within walking distance of the school.



Bus Information: Route numbers and stops for late buses are different from regular route numbers and stops. Late bus schedules are posted in [Blackboard Parent View](#) and students can ask for help at the Main Office to identify their late bus route number and stop. Students may only ride their assigned late bus. A parent can help by ensuring that his/her child knows which late bus to ride to avoid confusion in the afternoon.



Parent Pick-Up: A parent picking up a child should meet him/her at Door 12. If a parent needs to pick-up a child before the end of after-school activities, please park and come to the Main Office.

Students enjoying after-school clubs and activities this past week.



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News/Noteworthy

Vienna Turkey Trot - Join the Thoreau Running Club for the 2017 Vienna Turkey Trot 10K, 5K, and Fun Run on Sunday, November 19th at 8:00AM at the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department. Early bird registration ends on Tuesday October 31st. This community event benefits the Madison HS "Pride of Vienna" Band and the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department. To register, click [here](#).



Scoliosis Information - Scoliosis is a sideways curvature of the spine that occurs most often in children during the growth spurt just before puberty. Most cases of scoliosis are mild, however, some children have more severe spinal deformities that continue to get worse as they grow. Severe scoliosis can be disabling. Treatment may include bracing or surgery. For more information on scoliosis, click [here](#) for a scoliosis fact sheet.

Thoreau Yearbook - The Thoreau yearbook is the cheapest it will be all year - only \$30 through Tuesday, October 31st! Yearbooks can be purchased online through [MySchoolBucks](#). If you have questions, please contact Ms. Benzion, yearbook sponsor, at gbenzion@fcps.edu.

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Main Office: 703-846-8000
Attendance: 703-846-8080

Thoreau Website:
www.fcps.edu/ThoreauMS

PTA Website:
www.ThoreauPTA.org

PTA NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you to all that joined us for our PTA meeting last Tuesday. Our next PTA meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 17th at 7:00PM** in Eagle Hall. We will feature educational consultant Ann Dolin on *Getting Past Procrastination: Learn why kids struggle to stay organized, plan ahead, and focus and what you can do as a parent to help*.

Please join us for Dining for Dollars at **CAVA in Vienna** on **Thursday, October 19th from 6:00PM-10:00PM**. 25% of every meal purchased will be donated to the Thoreau PTA. Please mention Thoreau at the register.

Please join and support the Thoreau PTA! Our PTA strives to sponsor many projects and events that help provide a more enriching learning experience for all of our students. **Please join the PTA today!**

In addition to membership dues, we are asking for a suggested annual **donation of \$50** per family. All donations are tax deductible. Your annual donation is essential in providing the following:

- Sponsorship of parent educational programs and student activities
- Funding furniture, laptops and technology
- Providing Thoreau staff with enrichment opportunities and appreciation events
- Beautifying the school grounds
- Providing free directories for all students

Help is needed for the **Thoreau Garden**. The Garden Committee meets on Wednesday mornings from 10:00AM-11:30AM and then committee members often go out to lunch. They focus on weeding, planting flowers, feeding both land and water turtles and fish, caring for the pond, filling bird feeders, moving plants, and building walkways. Come join them!

Thoreau spirit wear is available online! Wear your Blue and Gold and show your Golden Eagle pride! If you are interested in purchasing Thoreau spirit wear, please use this [link](#) at <https://athleticunion.com/thoreau/>. All purchases are made online and will be delivered straight to your door. Thank you to **Natacha Moore** and **Talene Lanuza Staab** for volunteering to chair spirit wear!

Sincerely,
Beth Eachus

President@ThoreauPTA.org