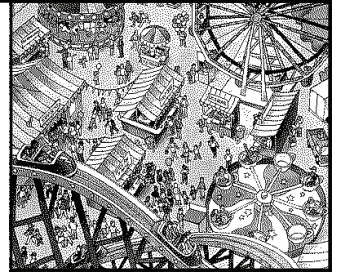


December 7, 2007

**If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. The more things you do, the more you can do.**

*-Lucille Ball*



**The Midway**  
Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School

### Reminders

Some quick reminders for you when we're all so busy:

- JDMS logo fleece shirts from Lands End orders are due Friday, December 7th. Drop off the order in the box in the office *in the morning*, please! We can get free shipping with our timely order.
- The JDMS Holiday Gathering is Thursday, December 13th, at Saratoga Steaks. Make your reservation with a member of the Sunshine Committee as soon as possible.
- United Way pledges are due to Melissa Dardaris by December 14th. Extra cards are available in the main office.
- The 5th and 6th grades will be going to see *Fiddler on the Roof* on Friday, December 14th.

### Sports Hall of Fame

Bill Brown wants everyone to know about the induction ceremonies for the 2007-2008 class of The Jamesville – DeWitt High School Athletic Hall of Fame. This year the inductees are: Kevin Cobb - Contributor, Jim DeOrio - Coach, Matt Palumb '86 - Athlete, Vivianne Sahyoun '95 - Athlete, and the 1990 Boys Basketball Team. The event is scheduled for January 11, 2008, with reception and dinner before the boy's basketball game and induction at half-time of the game. Adult dinners are \$20 and children under 12 are \$12. Checks should be made out to The Jamesville – DeWitt All Sports Boosters and should be sent to Bill by January 2, 2008 with the reservation form.

### Framing the Learning When Presenting Information

During December and January we're going to be focusing on some ways to ensure that the presentation of new information to our students is as effective as possible. There are tried and true methods that many of us experienced as learners that we now use as teachers when introducing new material, such as lectures, demonstrations, discussions, reading, videos, and guest speakers. This week, we've attached a compilation of some fundamental guidelines to remind us how important it is to "Frame the Learning" for the students. Never should we just present new information. We have to get learners ready to receive the new information, we have to make sure that the learners interact with the new learning during the presentation, and we have to make sure that learners process the new information.



*Our custodial crew spends long hours outdoors in the elements making our way clear and safe. Thanks, guys!*

### Concerts

December is concert time. The kids really love it when their teachers can make it to a concert; bring your family along! Here's the December line-up:

8th grade band and chorus:  
December 11th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

7th grade band and chorus:  
December 12th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

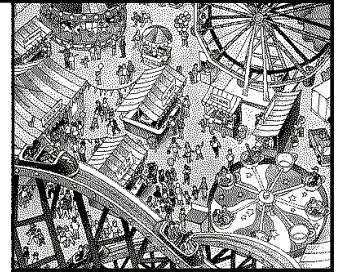
6th grade band, chorus & orchestra:  
December 18th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

5th grade band, chorus & orchestra:  
December 19th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

December 14, 2007

**It is the extreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.**

*-Albert Einstein*



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### **Please Join Us...**

Don't bring (or buy) your lunch on Wednesday, December 19th. We want to say thank you and happy holidays with a holiday luncheon. During all of the lunch periods on Wednesday, we'll be providing lunch for everyone in the Faculty Dining Room. We'll be serving chicken Cæsar salad, soup, bread, and dessert. Please join us for lunch!

### **Experiential Counseling Group's First Trip**

The experiential counseling group took their first trip this week. They visited the *Post-Standard* facility. We know that learning occurs when there is real-world application, and this is especially true for this group of students. Heather Meyer, Amy LeStrange, and Kathy Taylor planned this outing and others like it to show their students the relevance of education and connections to their lives (and futures). We all know that different students come with different experiences and exposure to different opportunities; this group is making it so.

### **Demonstrations and Beyond**

We demonstrate things to our students all the time. It's a common method of introducing a new skill or idea. We demonstrate in all disciplines and content areas: lay-ups, thesis statements, division, map-reading, cooking, dissection, posture, technique, etc. This week, we've included some simple tips to increase the effectiveness of demonstrations. Most importantly, our students ought to process what they have observed. Layering on another method, the "think-aloud," is a great way to not only demonstrate the skill but also to demonstrate the thinking process involved when one is using the skill. These excerpts and compilations about the "Old Faithfuls" that we are featuring in December and January fit into the delivery section of your *JDMS Learning* binder.

### **The Tests are Coming, The Tests Are Coming!**

Right after the holiday season comes testing season in New York State. Don't forget that much of January is impacted by the ELA tests. The 5th grade tests are scheduled for January 8th and 9th. For 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, the dates are January 16th and 17th (6th grade also has testing on the 18th). For the most part, things will be similar to last year. Specific times, locations, and proctoring assignments are forthcoming.

### **Concerts**

We have two more concerts. The kids really love it when their teachers come to see them; bring your family along! Here's the remaining line-up:

6th grade band, chorus & orchestra:  
December 18th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

5th grade band, chorus & orchestra:  
December 19th, 7:00 PM, High School Aud

### **Enrollment Update**

It seems like we've been welcoming a number of students to our school community during the past week or two. What is our enrollment? Here are the stats:

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 5th grade: 221 | 6th grade: 209 |
| 7th grade: 223 | 8th grade: 231 |

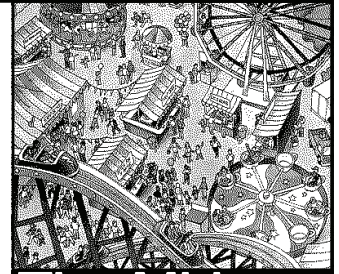


*This is the crew that helped the National Guardsmen load our cans onto the truck for delivery to the Salvation Army.*

December 21, 2007

## Remember this December, that love weighs more than gold!

-Josephine Dodge Daskam Bacon



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Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School

### Peace

We want to wish you the best at this time of year and we want to wish you the happiest of New Years. Enjoy your time away from school in the company of friends and family. We also hope you find some time alone to reflect upon a successful year and to anticipate an even better one. We love coming to work, everyday, because of you and our awesome kids. Peace!

### Chinese

We are proceeding with plans to add a third language to our Worlds Languages program: Chinese. Based on the Board of Education's suggestion to expand our World Languages offerings, the recommendation is that the additional language be Chinese based on discussions and input from national researchers in the area of global education as well as those who come from the perspective of the role of education in preparing students to be successful in a global workforce. In January, our 5th graders will be presented with information about French, Spanish, and Chinese and will be asked to choose which language they will learn. Additionally, an elective in Chinese studies will be included in the high school's course offerings.

### This Week's Article

In a departure from our usual article, we've attached a heart-warming story that seemed appropriate for this time of year. It's a story that many of us have probably read... but it's always worth reading. In January, we will return to our exploration of how to keep the "Old Faithfuls" as effective as ever. Next up: Lectures.

### The Tests are Coming, The Tests Are Coming!

Right after the holiday season comes testing season in New York State. Don't forget that much of January is impacted by the ELA tests. The 5th grade tests are scheduled for January 8th and 9th. For 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, the dates are January 16th and 17th (6th grade will also be testing on the 18th). For the most part, things will be similar to last year. Specific times, locations, and proctoring assignments are forthcoming.



*Some of Amy Spitzer's Homebase students are pictured here with the toys collected for the Girls & Boys Club.*

### Concerts

During the past two weeks we've been treated to a celebration of music like no other. Our 8th graders began the season of song in a splendid, strong way that reflects their experience and training at the middle school. Our last concert, of 5th graders, included the largest chorus (more than 100 students strong) that we've ever had. Between the 8th and 5th graders we marveled at the talents and growth of our 6th and 7th graders. Thank you Shawn Herbert, Debbie Cunningham, Debbie MacAllister, Teresa Razmjou, Cherry Thun, and Tony Greene for your patience, encouragement, and leadership. Thanks too, to the many teachers who took time out from your busy December schedule to come to a concert: it means so much to your students that you come!



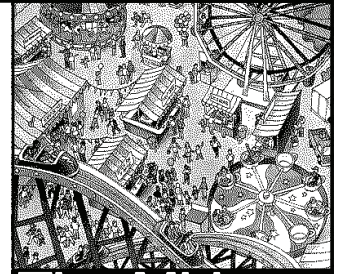
*Students from Kathy Taylor's Homebase at the mall where they staffed the Salvation Army kettle and bell.*



January 4, 2008

**A New Year's resolution is something  
that goes in one year and out the other.**

-Unknown



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### **The Bee Hits JDMS and then the Community**

The JDMS Spelling Bee was a hit! Having two locations to provide an opportunity for students to participate here at JDMS after school and also in the evening at Springfield Gardens proved to be a success. Over fifty students signed-up and participated for the Bee held at JDMS and seventeen students registered and participated in the Bee held at Springfield. Our goal was to boost overall participation with a focus on engaging students who traditionally are not represented in spelling bees. Although the Klim Center was not ready for occupancy (we were on an hour to hour basis), Jim Wentworth, Joe Hardy and Mike Moracco transformed a dingy laundry room into a stage fit for a Bee! We thank all of the parents and staff for making these events successful. Special thanks goes to Megan Foster for her spelling bee advisement and expertise (ask her about her Bee days, she still has the \$10 she won in middle school).

### **This Week's Article: Lectures**

We've all been on both the giving and receiving end of a lecture, and we've all been to examples of both good and bad lectures. In response to perceived pressures to "cover more in less time" we frequently revert to the use of a lecture in our classes. Good lectures can be captivating and informative. Bad lectures, on the other hand, can overwhelm and confuse students. During the month of January we'll be focusing on lectures. First up, an overview. We'll follow-up in subsequent weeks with information about discussion partners, effective use of examples, and the role of the metaphor in lectures.

*Another fresh new year is here . . .  
Another year to live!  
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,  
To love and laugh and give!*

*This bright new year is given me  
To live each day with zest . . .  
To daily grow and try to be  
My highest and my best!*

*I have the opportunity  
Once more to right some wrongs,  
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,  
And sing more joyful songs!*

-William Arthur Ward

### **Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities**

Address one of your New Year Resolutions with these upcoming ERO sessions:

- Part 2 of Differentiation For Classroom Instruction on 1/9/08
- Differentiated Instruction in the Brain-Based Classroom on 1/23/08 and 1/30/08
- Passport to Literacy on 2/12/08
- Reading IEPs will soon be announced.

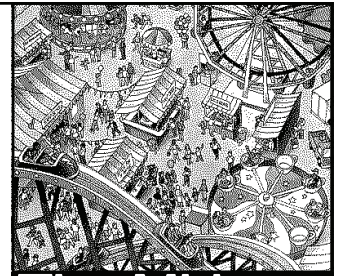


*The first day of Tom Sawyer rehearsal. Literally, not enough room for so large a group. What a great problem to have!*

January 11, 2008

**The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway."**

*-Kent M. Keith*



**The Midway**  
Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School



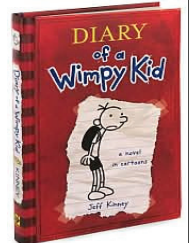
*Melissa Dardaris (pictured with Tom Taylor, Board president) was recognized at the Board of Education Meeting for her district-wide coordination of the United Way campaign. Thanks, Melissa, for taking on this important task!*

### **Science Olympiad Underway**

The Science Olympiad is well underway, here at JDMS. Students have been working on their designs for a number of events. Our own, internal Science Olympiad is underway as we narrow the field to our final competition team. It is simply fascinating to see the students' different approaches to the scientific and engineering challenges they are asked to surmount. It's serious work! We'll keep you posted as to the team's process and will share pictures in the hall kiosk.

### **5th Grade Book Club**

The 5th grade book club has finished their second book of the year: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. The group, initiated by a couple of fifth grade students and facilitated by Cindy Dudczak, meets over lunch to discuss a common book and then choose the subsequent read. What's especially interesting about this group is that it truly was initiated by some students. Students publicized and recruited; Cindy helps to organize and maintain the group.



### **This Week's Article: Lectures and Discussion Partners**

Discussion partners are just for lectures, but they are a great way to build in a predictable, repeatable procedure through which students can process incoming information. You might recall Mary Budd Rowe's advice (10:2 Theory): To reduce the information loss, we should pause for two minutes at about ten minute intervals... For every ten minutes or so of meaningful chunks of new information, learners should be provided with two or so minutes to process information. This week's article offers some suggestions for using discussion partners as a way to provide the "2" in 10:2.

### **Activity Afternoon and Night**

There is a 5th and 6th Grade Activity Afternoon this Friday (January 11th), from 2:45 - 4:05 PM. Fifth and sixth graders can stay after school for music (professional DJ), games (in the gym), and organized BINGO (with prizes). Snacks and bottled water will be available for purchase. The Activity Night for 7th and 8th graders, is this Friday (January 11th), 7:00 - 9:00 PM. As usual, there will be music (professional DJ) and games (in the gym). Snacks and bottled water will be available for purchase. The pool, too, will be available for free swim. Of course, the more chaperones the better with these events. They really are fun and our kids are typically well-behaved — we'd love to have you come and join us!



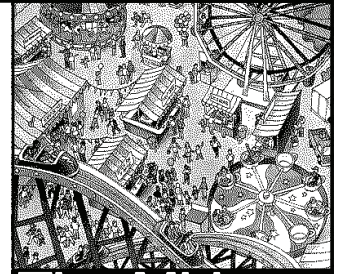
*The experiential counseling group was again on their way this week. The group visited the VA Hospital, delivered cards, and chatted with patients. The kids also got to meet John Desko who offered a few encouraging words. Some of these students, for whom school success is still elusive, really shined in their interactions with the veterans. It was a great trip!*



January 18, 2008

**The time is always right to do what is right.**

*-Martin Luther King, Jr.*



**The Midway**  
Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School

### **2008-2009, Already?**

Even though we've not quite reached the midpoint of this school year, attention is already being focused on next year. As we all know, the budget process is well underway (budgets are actually being formulated now). Staff projections are occurring. A sixth grade discussion has started about next year and how we should organize given the large enrollment we will have in sixth grade next year. The special education department has been meeting repeatedly to look at program and projections for next year. During the next month, team meetings and department meetings will include time to provide feedback and suggestions about this year's master schedule in order to make minor, non-structural adjustments and improvements (as always). Our World Languages department will be presenting language choices to the 5th graders next week. Soon, the many transition meetings and tours will be underway. It is hard to look at next year while in the midst of this year, but such is the nature of our cyclical industry and the budgeting and planning process. Thanks, in advance, for all your efforts to make *next* year a success!

### **40 Developmental Assets**

At Tuesday's faculty meeting we will have a presentation about the 40 Developmental Assets. Most of us have heard of the Assets and are vaguely aware of them. Part of the BLT plan for the year is to educate our educational community about the assets. A teacher page about the Assets has been created. You can find it at <http://www.jamesvilledewitt.org/teacherpage2.cfm?teacher=288> or just browse to it from our JDMS list of teacher pages at the website.

### **This Week's Article: Lectures and Discussion Partners**

Continuing our series on lectures, the attached compilation suggests some ways to effectively use examples in our lectures. As you read it, you'll see that both examples and nonexamples are



Bob Fitch/Black Star

stressed. Additionally, you'll find mention of the importance of multiple representations of new terms/vocabulary. When you focus on new words with your students, try not to rely on dictionary definitions alone. It is through linguistic and nonlinguistic representations, as well as examples and nonexamples, that students really learn new words. This is all the more true for specialized meaning of words in some of our content areas. There is a great flash video about this at [http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/six\\_step\\_flash.html](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/six_step_flash.html). Check it out!

### **PTG Meeting**

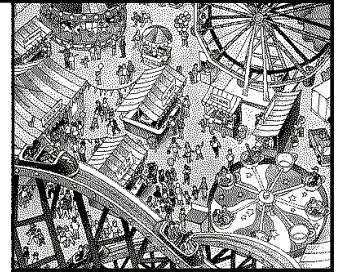
There was a PTG meeting this week. Approximately 30 parents came to catch up on PTG business, hear a little about what is going on at school, and learn about the 40 Developmental Assets. Included in the BLT plan for education about the Developmental Assets was a presentation for parents. At that meeting we tried to introduce the ideas of the assets to parents and provide them with a few small, concrete ways that we all can be asset-builders. We also discussed the March 8th Parent Learning Forum that will take place. It's a morning program that will include breakfast, eight speakers, door prizes, and a Barnes & Noble Book Sale.

*At this time of year, this picture is as compelling as ever.*

January 25, 2008

**Finding information on the Internet is a bit like trying to get a sip of water from an uncorked fire hydrant.**

-Alexander Colhoun



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Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School



### **The Big 6: A Research/Information Literacy Approach**

Each year we ask our students to conduct all sorts of research. We have small research efforts and we have big research projects that take weeks and weeks. Yet, we don't have a common research model that we consistently teach our students to use. Might our students have an easier job when researching if we all had common expectations for research and used a common language? Indeed, it not only would be easier for our students, but it might be easier for teachers, too. One commonly used research/information literacy approach is called the Big6. Developed by Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz, the Big6 is the most commonly used approach to teaching information and technology skills in the world. It is an information and technology literacy model and curriculum, implemented in thousands of schools at all levels. Some people call the Big6 an information problem-solving approach because with the Big6, students are able to handle any problem, assignment, decision or task. Because the Big6 is a problem-solving approach, it is completely parallel to the scientific method and other similar approaches. The district library/media specialists have investigated the Big6 and will continue to explore the possible application of the Big6 to our JDMS research instruction.

### **This Week's Article: Analogies & Metaphors**

Last week, the attached reading suggested ways to effectively use examples and nonexamples. This week's article encourages us to use metaphors and analogies with our lectures and examples as a way of further using examples and nonexamples. Marzano (2001) demonstrated that the effective use of metaphors, analogies, and other examples can have an incredible impact on student understanding. He made four points about the importance of identifying similarities and differences:

1. Presenting students with explicit guidance in identifying similarities and differences enhances students' understanding of and ability to use knowledge.
2. Asking students to independently identify similarities and differences enhances students' understanding of and ability to use knowledge.
3. Representing similarities and differences in graphic or symbolic form enhances students' understanding of and ability to use knowledge.
4. Identification of similarities and differences can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The identification of similarities and differences is a highly robust activity.

### **Literature Circles with Ben Mikaelson**

If you entered Room 102 or Room 103 recently you would see sixth grade students actively engaged in literature circles. You would hear sixth grade students talking about the author, story plot, and making personal connections to the characters and their actions. The theme of the literature circles is Ben Mikaelson books. The literature circle groups are enjoying *Stranded*, *Countdown*, *Rescue Josh McGuire*, *Sparrow Hawk Red*, *Touching Spirit Bear*, and *Petey*. The literature circles will conclude with group presentations on Thursday, January 24th. The *Touching Spirit Bear* group is very excited about the 2008 release of *Ghost of Spirit Bear* (the sequel). By the way, Ben Mikaelson will be here at JDMS, working with 6th, 7th, and 8th graders on April 8th.



A doorway view of literature circles.