

The Parnassus Columns

Volume 1, Issue 5

November 3, 2011



Thank you to all of the parents and guardians who attended parent-teacher conferences last week. We had a tremendous turnout with nearly full attendance by all of our parents! This is just another example of the myriad ways Parnassus Preparatory School is an exceptional and extraordinary school. During conferences,

parents presented a number of common questions that we thought would be good to address in the *Columns* so everyone receives the same information.

Can you tell us more about report cards?

Report cards were sent home in the Thursday Folders today for the first quarter. Please sign and return the report card envelope to your child's homeroom teacher to indicate that you have received and viewed the report card.

We are in the process of searching for a new Student Information System which will change the appearance of our report cards for Quarters 2 – 4. We will provide more information for parents in the future when we have a new system in place, which will hopefully include a parent portal for viewing your child's academic and other information throughout each quarter.

Please see Page 3 of this newsletter for a listing of subjects you will see reflected on your child's report card, followed by the school's grading policy.

Does Parnassus have classroom parties such as holiday parties?

Parnassus does not hold parties in the classrooms as one often sees in traditional schools. This is one of the areas that makes our school unique. With a goal of making every educational minute matter, we want to assure you that when your children are at Parnassus

they are learning and focusing on serious scholarship. In the rare times when classrooms do have a party or special event during the school day, it will be directly tied to the curriculum and will add to the instructional environment by conveying knowledge or an experience that supports the curriculum. An example of such an event would be a Medieval Feast. Each classroom will have only one special event or party per school year.

How does the school plan to prepare students to live in a highly technological world?

Our Classical Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) is intended to provide a foundation for further, more specialized, subject study as students complete their specialized studies at Parnassus. In an age of increasing technological specialization, it is even more important to provide a strong base of common knowledge as well as the tools of learning so students will have the capacity to think across these divisions. Often the discussion of "preparing for a technological world" comes down to introducing expensive and quickly outdated technological devices into schools. Even in a world with technology and a plethora of information at students' fingertips, students must still possess a strong body of knowledge, based on teacher-led instruction. That, in combination with learning to read widely, will give students the tools they need to be lifelong scholars. We tend to assume that technology has not altered human nature in any fundamental way: children learn mostly from teachers, who do at times use some technological tools to help them teach. That is not to say, however, that our students will not have access to computers from time to time in the upper levels of the School of Grammar and in the Schools of Logic and Rhetoric. Students will use computers for research and presentations and will have a general understanding of basic computer programs such as Word, PowerPoint, etc.

Can you explain skill-level grouping at Parnassus?

Skill grouping students who are learning to read and building a foundation in math is a critical part of the Parnassus educational structure. A classical education is language based so we work heavily in the School of Grammar to ensure that all of our students have a strong foundation in reading skills. In the same manner, building the critical skills necessary for the study of mathematics and logical thought also require an important foundation in essential skills. At Parnassus, students in grades K – 3 are grouped

according to their skill levels in reading and students in grades K – 12 are grouped according to their skill levels for math. Our Executive Director oversees our skill groups and determines the skill-group matrices. Both our faculty and Executive Director make decisions on individual placement in reading and math. While parent feedback is always welcome, the placement of a student in a particular skill-level class is made exclusively by authorized school personnel to promote educational excellence and fairness by placing students at the most appropriate level for instruction.

Can the school provide a list for parents of healthy snack choices?

Please see the list on Page 3 of this newsletter for suggestions regarding healthy snacks to send to school.

Do kindergarten students have opportunities to move around during the school day since they sit at desks for instruction?

Absolutely! Our kindergarten teachers do a great job of keeping our students appropriately moving as needed throughout the day. They each build in short breaks to stand and move around, to take classroom bathroom breaks, etc. Snack time and recesses are added for full-day students, along with story and rest times. Whether students are in the full-day program or half day, they still receive music instruction twice a week which involves lots of physical activity at the kindergarten level and on two different days of the week, they have taekwondo lessons. Our Direct Instruction reading program is excellent for keeping students focused and energized because of its fast pace and choral responses.

An important part of our school's mission and even our contract with the state in our charter, was the emphasis on a highly academic kindergarten program. At Parnassus, we don't think of kindergarten as a continuation of pre-school, but rather, as the first year of preparation for thirteen years of serious study. The kindergarten program at Parnassus could be compared to a rigorous first grade program in other schools where students are learning to read, building essential math skills, learning world history and geography, beginning to learn and comprehend and speak in Spanish, studying important facts in science, and so much more. Students in our kindergarten program set the tone for our school's formal structure and teacher-led instruction. When you visit our classrooms, you will notice immediately that our kindergartners have desks in rows that face the teacher – not what you'd see in a pre-school, but definitely what you'd see in a high quality first grade. Our kindergarten program is a fast-paced, exciting learning environment that is building an excellent foundation for our students.

Why does Parnassus focus on formality?

Visitors at Parnassus immediately notice the difference in our formal culture compared to what they see in

many schools. Our formality underscores and supports our emphasis on structure, discipline, and excellence. It is evident in our students' uniforms which have specific guidelines that are strictly adhered to. Our staff members represent our school well as they dress in business attire each day and in formal business attire for parent meetings and important events. When you visit our classrooms you will notice students standing when they address their teachers as a sign of respect and also to teach them to speak in front of others with good posture, strong voices, poise, and a command of speech. This will serve them well in the School of Rhetoric. Staff members address one another by Mr., Ms., Mrs., etc. and not by first names. We address parents the same way and ask parents to do the same in return as we continue to build our formal and extraordinary culture at Parnassus.

With 30 students in each of the kindergarten classrooms, will para-professional support be increased?

Structured, fast-paced kindergarten programs in a classical framework can very successfully teach 30 students in a classroom and that is the kindergarten model at Parnassus. We do realize, however, that young children often require more hands and eyes than one teacher can provide, and we have adjusted schedules so each kindergarten classroom will have fulltime para-professional support throughout the school day for the remainder of the school year. During reading class, the para-professional is also able to assist the teacher by working with smaller groups.

What separation do our 5th and 6th grade students have from the School of Grammar?

As our program grows, so will our ability to develop a schedule, and even physical space, around the School of Logic to further delineate the differences between the Schools of Grammar and Logic in our program. Currently, our students in the School of Logic have a different schedule where they change classrooms for subjects. In the future, students will have even more teachers and classrooms in their school day. Our Logic students now have a different lunch schedule than the younger grades and wear different uniforms to distinguish their level. We are working on leadership opportunities for our Logic students as well. In the future, we hope to see many of them in extra-curricular programs such as debate teams, Science Olympiad, robotics, etc.

Watch for upcoming informational meetings for prospective parents on our schools of Logic and Rhetoric. Parents of current students are welcome to attend those sessions to learn more about our curriculum and program in the upper grades.

~Mrs. Ford
Executive Director

Healthy Snacks

Below is a short list of acceptable and unacceptable healthy snack choices to assist parents in making healthy snack choices for their children:

Healthy School Snacks	None of These Please
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fresh fruit that requires no classroom preparation -Dried fruit (unsweetened) -Pretzels -Rice cakes -Cheese -Granola bars (low fat, low sugar) -Crackers (whole grain is better) -Sandwich half -Whole grain bagel -Raw vegetables -Muffins (low fat) -Yogurt -Popcorn (no butter) -Nuts (check with teacher to see if permitted) -Unsweetened cereal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Carbonated beverages -High sugar, high fat foods -Desserts -Candy -Items needing refrigeration -Potato chips and similar chips -Fruit roll-ups, prepackaged "fruit" snacks -For younger children...things children cannot open on their own!

Parnassus Preparatory School Report Card Subjects

<p>Grade K: Art – Semester History and Geography Language Arts Math Music – Semester Reading Science Spanish – Semester Taekwondo – Semester</p>	<p>Grade 1: Art – Semester History and Geography Language Arts Math Music – Semester Reading Science Spanish – Semester Taekwondo – Semester</p>	<p>Grade 2: Art – Semester Grammar History and Geography Language Arts Math Music – Semester Reading Science Spanish – Semester Spelling and Penmanship Taekwondo – Semester</p>
<p>Grade 3: Art – Semester Grammar History and Geography Language Arts Latin Math Music – Semester Reading Science Spanish Spelling and Penmanship Taekwondo – Semester</p>	<p>Grade 4: Art – Semester Grammar and Writing History and Geography Literature Latin Math Music – Semester Science Spanish Spelling Taekwondo</p>	<p>Grade 5: Art – Semester History and Geography Language Arts Latin Logic Math Music – Semester Science Spanish Taekwondo – Semester</p>
<p>Grade 6: Art – Semester History and Geography Language Arts Latin Logic Math Music – Semester Science Spanish Taekwondo – Semester</p>	<p>Please remember to sign your child's report card envelope and return as soon as possible to his or her homeroom teacher. Thank you!</p>	

Grading Policy

Grading is not the be-all and end-all of education. Still, grades are a useful tool to evaluate the extent to which a student has mastered a particular skill or course. Therefore grades will be assigned in all subjects. Parnassus will assign grades in order to reflect accurately the range between true mastery and insufficient knowledge of a subject. Grade inflation will be discouraged. In this scheme the following letter grades have these meanings:

- A – Mastery
- B – Proficiency
- C – Sufficiency (Competence)
- D – Insufficiency
- F – Failing

Students receive report cards at the end of each quarter (four times per year). In addition to these general parameters, we will be using a 4.0 grading scale. The letter and numerical grades for this system are listed below:

Percentage Score	Letter	Grade	
94-100%	A	4.0	Indicates outstanding work in a subject.
90-93%	A-	3.7	
87-89%	B+	3.3	
84-86%	B	3.0	Indicates above average work in a subject.
80-83%	B-	2.7	
77-79%	C+	2.3	
74-76%	C	2.0	Indicates average work in a subject for the grade level.
70-73%	C-	1.7	
67-69%	D+	1.3	
64-66%	D	1.0	Indicates below average work in a subject.
60-63%	D-	0.7	
0-59%	F	0.0	Indicates failure. The student has not met the minimum requirements of the course, and has made no definite effort to do the assigned work in a satisfactory manner.
INC			Indicates work is not yet completed for grading period.
Schools of Logic and Rhetoric Honor Roll:			A-Level Honor Roll is 3.50 - 4.00 B-Level Honor Roll is 3.00 - 3.49

The grading scale as defined above is utilized for all students with the exception of kindergarten and first grade, where the scale will reflect A, B, C, and Needs Improvement. Incompletes will only be given under special circumstances as determined by the school's policy. Schoolwork, especially in the upper grades, will be graded on content, accuracy, timeliness, and quality of preparation.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER!

November	6	Daylight Saving Time ends – remember to fall back an hour!
	8	School Board Meeting
	23-25	NO SCHOOL: Thanksgiving Break
December	22	NO SCHOOL: Teacher planning day
	23-30	NO SCHOOL: Winter Break
January	2-6	NO SCHOOL: Winter Break
	9	School Resumes
	16	NO SCHOOL: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

News and Updates from our School's Principal, Mr. Vetsch

Morning Drop-off:

If you are dropping your children off at school in the morning, please drop your children off next to the curb. For safety reasons, unless you are parking and walking your children to school, cars should enter the back of the parking lot from 96th Avenue North and access the school building along the curb. The pavement (road) directly in front of the school should be treated as a one-way. Please refer to the diagram that was sent home earlier this school year. I understand that this may take more time for you in the morning but the safety of your children is more important.

Tardy Students:

Students who are not in their desks ready to learn when the 8 a.m. bell sounds are marked tardy. Students should be arriving to school no later than 7:55. If you drive your children to school, make sure to give yourself plenty of time especially with the winter time approaching.

Thank You:

The Parnassus Preparatory School staff would like to thank the families that provided food for us during our conferences last week. It was very much appreciated and delicious as well!

Lost and Found:

The school has a Lost and Found area that is located by the front door of the school. If you notice that your child is missing anything, you may want to visit our Lost and Found. Make sure that you are labeling your child's clothing with their names –especially with school uniforms, everything looks the same.

Registration for the 2012-13 School Year:

Parnassus Preparatory School will start accepting applications for the 2012-13 School year starting November 15. Applications will be accepted until January 31st. All applications submitted during this time period will be entered into our lottery and open positions will be filled through the lottery process. The school will be hosting informational meetings and open houses over the next few months. If you know any families that may be interested in our excellent school, please refer them to our school website for registration details (www.parnassusprep.com).

Parents Helping Parnassus Volunteer Opportunity:

With our registration period for the 2012-13 school year starting next month, volunteers are needed to help with marketing. The school will be having informational meetings and open houses during this time and needs help getting the word out to the public. Flyers will need to be distributed to local businesses, preschools, etc. If you are interested, contact Mr. Vetsch at 763-496-1416 ext. 11.

School Closings:

In the event that Parnassus Preparatory School will be closed, close early, or have a late start, tune into WCCO for postings. WCCO can be accessed by viewing channel 4 on your televisions, listening to the radio on AM 830, or visiting their website at www.wcco.com. Our school will be listed as Parnassus Preparatory School.

It's That Time of Year Again:

As the weather changes to winter, please work with your children to develop new morning routines in order to start earlier each morning and arrive at school on time. As you know, not only does it take longer to dress in layered clothing and traffic also changes as the conditions of the road change with snow and ice. Also, please remind your children to dress warmly so we can help keep them as healthy and comfortable as possible during times outdoors.

Expect that your child will have outdoor recess each day. (Students should be dressing warmly anyway. One never knows when a bus or car may break down.) Students will have indoor recess if the weather and/or wind chill is below zero at the time of recess. This decision is made at 11 a.m. each day (not 7 a.m.). Our playground will be plowed out when we have snow so students will be able to play outside in the winter. Students in grades K-3 are required to wear boots and snow pants when there is snow. Snowpants and boots are recommended for students in grades 4-6 but not required.

Influenza: What You Need to Know

Influenza (also called flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Flu viruses are spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person, though sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Symptoms of flu include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches

The best way to prevent the flu is to be immunized against the flu. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommends Influenza vaccination for children 6 months through 18 years of age. Vaccine is available as nasal spray or injection. Immunizations are available through physicians, public health, and at many local sites. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May, so it is not too late to be immunized!

Other ways to help stop the spread of flu viruses

- Wash hands often
- Stay home when you are sick
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water and eat good food particularly fruits and vegetables
- Discuss with your physician if the flu vaccination is right for you and your family.

People need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water and eat good food to help them stay healthy in the winter and all year. Be proactive in protecting your health! Discuss the flu vaccine with your health care provider to determine if it is right for you and your family. For more information, please go to www.cdc.gov or contact your healthcare provider.

PARNASSUS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

11201 96th Avenue North
Maple Grove, MN 55369

Main Office Hours: 7:30am – 4:00pm
Main Number: 763.496.1416
To report a student absence, please press 8
Fax: 763.898.3977

BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 4:00 – 6:00PM:

For Emergencies between 4pm – 6pm or to reach the after-school program, please call: 612.222.6913 or 763.350.1827.