

Cougar Connection

A Publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA
December 2008

“One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar.”
— Helen A. Keller



Helen Keller Middle School
360 Sport Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612
<http://er9.org/hkms>

Phone:
(203) 268-8651

Fax:
(203)-268-6105

Cougar Connection Deadline—The Cougar Connection is a monthly publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA. We welcome submissions from the HKMS community. Send your school-related and PTA-related articles to Lisa DeVoto at lisadevoto@optonline.net one week before the first of the month. Previous issues of the Cougar Connection can be found on the Helen Keller Middle School website at <http://er9.org/hkms> and the PTA website at <http://www.eastonpta.com>.

Principal's Pen

Dear Parents:

As you know, our staff continues to impress upon our students the need to complete their homework in a timely and responsible manner. Our practice is based on research which I believe you may find interesting. As always, we solicit your support as we strive to have all of our students excel.

Question: **Overall, does homework improve achievement?**

Answer: Yes. In six studies that purposively varied whether homework was assigned, 7 samples showed homework had a positive effect on unit tests, and 0 samples showed homework had a negative effect on unit tests. In 32 studies that used simple correlations, 27 samples showed a positive link to grades or standardized tests, and 8 samples showed a negative link to grades or standardized tests.

Question: **How big is homework's effect on achievement?**

Answer: Based on studies that

varied whether homework was assigned...

- ...on unit tests, the average student doing homework performed better than about 73% of students doing no homework.
- ...grading on a curve, the student who received the middle C grade on the unit test in the homework group would have moved up to a B- grade had s/he been graded in the no-homework group.
- ...relative to other education interventions, homework has an above-average effect on achievement.

Question: **Is homework equally effective in all circumstances?**

Answer: Based on studies that simply correlated homework and achievement the link was stronger...

- ...for grades 6 to 12 students than

(continued on page 2)

Contents

Principal's Pen	1
Cougar Connection Deadline	1
Personnel News	2
News from the PTA Presidents	2
Media Center Update.....	3
Keller Teller Newspaper.....	3
Joel Barlow's Second Annual Jewelry Auction.....	3
December 2008 Calendar.....	4
January 2009 Calendar	5
Birthday Book Club Form.....	http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/hkms_birthday_book_club.pdf
PTA Membership Form.....	http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/membership_2008.pdf
Uno Chicago Grill Voucher – December	http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/uno_chicago_grill_december_17_2008.pdf

(Principal's Pen – continued from page 1)

for kindergarten through 5th grade students. The link was unclear for kindergarten through 5th grade students.

- ...when students reported time on homework than when parents reported for them. The link was unclear using parent estimates.

Given the above information, I encourage you to have frequent discussions with your children regarding homework and to communicate your academic aspirations to your child. The relationship between the dynamic of communicating your expectations and student achievement is fairly straight-forward – **high expectations communicated to students are associated with enhanced achievement.**

Please do not hesitate to call or write should you have any questions.

Respectfully,

—Joan Parker,
Helen Keller Middle School Principal

Personnel News

If you notice someone other than Mrs. Kilgannon sitting at her desk, it might be Meredith Klatt, a school psychologist who will be filling in for Mrs. Kilgannon while she is out on maternity leave. Mrs. Klatt worked as a school psychologist at a middle school in New Braunfels, Texas and at several elementary and middle schools in Houston, Texas prior to her family moving to Connecticut. She is excited about the opportunity to get to know the students, their families, and the staff of Helen Keller Middle School.

Mrs. Klatt graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1993 with a Bachelor in Social Work and then from Trinity University in San Antonio in 1997 with a M.A. in School Psychology. She is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP).

Mrs. Klatt, her husband, and three children (ages 8, 6, and 4) live in Weston. In her spare time, she loves to garden, read, hike, and most of all, ski!

Please drop by Mrs. Kilgannon's room and introduce yourself to Mrs. Klatt!

News from the PTA Presidents

It's hard to believe that this is our last CC for 2008! The PTA has had a very successful year so far and would like to thank you for your continued support. A special thank you goes out to the following volunteers who without their time and talent many activities would not exist.

Karen Marchetti for starting up the Big Y Program. We have already earned 2300 points!

Stephanie Frangenes for a VERY successful night at the Circus! 297 tickets were sold!

Lisa Sheehan for a wonderful turnout for Portrait Day.

Diane Karazulas and **Lori Lesko** for the successful and delicious Pie Sale. All funds will go towards the beautification of Keller.

A BIG thank you goes out to Phil LiCastrì for volunteering to coach this year's K–8th grade wrestling team. If you are interested in lending him a helping hand please contact him at kr@greenwood.com. If your child is interested in joining the team please register him/her at HKMS front office.

Lastly for 2008...

Our final project for 2008 is the wonderful Reflections contest. We are going paperless this year and will be posting all the documents needed to participate on our website at www.eastonpta.com. Sample packets will be available for viewing at both SSES and HKMS offices. If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Solway at Kelly@oneetiquetteplace.com.



Remember, Easton has one PTA that supports programs at Helen Keller Middle School and Samuel Staples Elementary School. Renew your PTA membership if you haven't already. Go to <http://www.eastonpta.com/membership.html>.

Things to Look Forward to in 2009

Recordings of both the chorus concert and band concert will be made and CDs will be available for purchase the night of the concerts. (More information will be available in January.)

Cookie Dough Sales...Keep your eyes out for our DELICIOUS spring fundraiser that provides us with yummy cookies, brownies, pretzels and so much more.

Parent University will be held once again with outstanding speakers to help support parents in their journey to raise healthy happy children.

Our spring event this year will be chaired by Rich Cremin and is sure to be a wonderful success!

Brick Dedication Coordinator Needed

We are looking for a parent or parents from each grade who will coordinate the campaign for graduating families of 8th graders and others in the spring. The materials are all prepared for this venture. Bricks are dedicated to graduating class members and installed around the flagpole area at the pickup loop. Call Margot Abrams 459-4759 for more information.

Upcoming PTA Meetings

December 12	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
January 9	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
February 20	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
March 13	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
April 24	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
May 15	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
June 5	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room

Media Center Update**HKMS Book Fair News**

Our winter Book Fair will be held December 8th–13th. We will have Adult and Juvenile Bestsellers, cookbooks, and a fabulous selection of gift books for purchase. New this year, we will be offering Teacher Gift Certificates for those who wish to remember a special teacher. We have a fantastic raffle planned on Tuesday, December 9th from 3–5 PM. The winner will receive \$25 in free books. Stop by to enter your name and enjoy some free cookies generously baked by our Keller parents.

In addition, we will collect loose change for Scholastic's One for Books program. Every dollar we collect will result in a donation by Scholastic to national non-profit organizations dedicated to helping families in need. Last but not least, don't forget to remind your kids that they can enter their names in our daily raffle when they buy books at our fair. Each day we will give away one book to a lucky student. We look forward to seeing you at the Fair.

Dates: Monday, December 8th – Saturday, December 13th. We are open 8:00 AM–3:00 PM daily.

We will have extended hours until 5 PM on Tuesday, December 9th (Religious Ed day), and 8 AM–11 AM during the HKMS 8th Grade Pancake Breakfast.

—**Carol Weinschel**,
Director, Learning Resources and Technology
(cweinschel@eastonps.org)

SSES School Calendars for Sale, \$5

School system holidays and SSES special days are listed on this 11 x 8 inches monthly wall calendar. It does not include HKMS special days. Copies are available at the SSES school store or call SSES Presidents Christine Cremin (371-1125) or Claire-Anne Meskers (374-5566) to buy copies.

—**Margot Abrams**
(margotaz@optonline.net)
and **Kathleen Wasmer**
(kathleenmom@optonline.net),
Easton PTA HKMS Co-Presidents

Keller Teller Newspaper

The Newspaper Club meets Monday mornings before school in the Media Center, 7:30–8 AM. The club publishes the *Keller Teller* several times during the school year. Copies of the newspaper are distributed to the HKMS community. (See previous issues at http://www.eastonpta.com/committees_a_i.html#newspaperclub.)

The staff is busily wrapping up our first issue of the school year, which will be available later this month. New members are welcome to join the club, and anyone who cannot attend meetings but who likes to write is welcome to submit an article to the Keller Teller mailbox in the main office.

—**Lisa DeVoto**,
Newspaper Club Parent Advisor

Joel Barlow's Second Annual Jewelry Auction

Over 40 pieces of jewelry all handmade by the award winning jewelry students at Joel Barlow High School

Friday, January 16th, Easton Library Community Room
7–8 PM: Auction preview, meet the artists, refreshments

8 PM: Live auction excitement with the return of Milo Cramer as our auctioneer!

All proceeds benefit our Lakota friends in South Dakota and Stetson Elementary School in Maine.

A \$5 donation for admission is most welcomed.


Snow date: Saturday, January 17th 7 PM

For more information contact Lee Skalkos

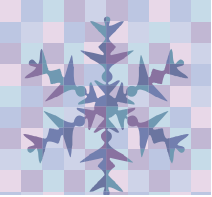
lskalkos@region9ps.org

938-2508 x1167

December 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 B 7:30–8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	2 C 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	3 D 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club	4 E 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	5 F 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	6
7	8 A 8 AM–3 PM—Book Fair 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	9 B 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir 8 AM–5 PM—Book Fair	10 C 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:40–8 AM—Student Council 8 AM–3 PM—Book Fair 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club	11 D 8 AM–3 PM—Book Fair 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	12 E 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 8 AM–3 PM—Book Fair 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	13 8–11 AM— 8 th Grade Pancake Breakfast 8–11 AM—Book Fair
14	15 F 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	16 A 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	17 B 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club Uno Chicago Grill Fundraiser	18 C 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	19 D 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	20
21	22 E 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–4:30 PM—Volleyball Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	23 F 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	24 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	25 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	26 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	27
28	29 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	30 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	31 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day (subject to schedule changes)		

January 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day (subject to schedule changes)			1 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	2 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	3
4	5 A 7:30–8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	6 B 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	7 C 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:40–8 AM—Student Council 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	8 D 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	9 E 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	10
11	12 F 7:30–8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	13 A 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	14 B 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 12:10 PM— EARLY DISMISSAL	15 C 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	16 D 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	17
18	19 NO SCHOOL (Martin Luther King Day)	20 E 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	21 F 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:40–8 AM—Student Council 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	22 A 3–5 PM—Play Rehearsal	23 B 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	24
25	26 (TENTATIVE) NO SCHOOL (Staff Day)	27 C 7:30–8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35–8 AM—Select Choir	28 D 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 2:45–3:45—Debate Club 2:45–3:45—Weather Club	29 E Band Concert	30 F 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 3–5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	31