

The Lotus Lowdown

February 10, 2023



Maria Francisco, Principal

Winter Social: POSTPONED

We are looking to reschedule the Winter Social in March. Once we receive approval we will share the date. Thank you for your understanding.

Help Renaissance win up to \$2,000 through MFEE:

Help win up to \$2,000 for Renaissance! [The Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence \(MFEE\)](https://www.montclairnj.org/education/mfee) is our town's local education fund that supports *all* Montclair students, teachers, staff, and caregivers. Renaissance students receive social/emotional support and innovative teaching tools through MFEE grants, teachers boost their learning through out-of-the-box Professional Development grants and MFEE's new Teacher Learning Communities, and families get resources and support through MFEE Programs like Learning Circles on Race, PEEPs in Nature, and Navegadores Escolares. Your donations - no matter how small - fuel all of this work! From now until February 28th, any donor who gives \$20 and above will be entered in a lottery to award a \$1,000 grant to their favorite school. Two winners will be chosen! CHB and Hillside won \$1,000 last year; it's Renaissance's turn! Be sure to "credit" Renaissance's team page when donating. While you're there, check out all of the ways that your donations boost learning at Renaissance. Donate here: <https://givebutter.com/mfeeforthem2023/renaissance2>

Gifted and Talented Services:

Attn: Families of students in grades K-7: The referral window for gifted and talented services for students currently in grades K-7 will be open from **Monday, February 13th (opens at 8:00 am) until Friday, February 27th** (closes at 4:00 pm). We have a [Family Identification Information Video](#) for your reference and the Referral Form in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) linked here and available on our website. The district Comprehensive Plan and more information can be found on our [district website](#). Thank you!

PTA Super Bowl Boxes: \$10 each

Our PTA still has a few super bowl boxes left for \$10 each. Half of the proceeds collected will go to the PTA and half will be the payout. If you are interested in purchasing a box for the super bowl, please email our PTA president, Gretchen Devinsky at ptapres@renaissancepta.org.

#GOJETS

Author Willie Mae Brown visits Renaissance Middle School February 8, 2023

Willie Mae Brown is a visual artist as well as an author who began writing stories about her childhood in 2012 and reading them in public in 2015. She is known for infusing her personal narratives with the vernacular of her Southern upbringing and has read at numerous public events including Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations at Brooklyn Borough Hall, as well as at many special events across the city, in her home state, and beyond. *My Selma* is her first book.

Ms. Brown captivated our students with ease, sharing stories of her childhood and the struggles she endured in her never ending plight to end slavery and racism. We are extremely honored to have heard Ms. Brown's first hand accounts of marching from Selma to Montgomery on March 7, 1965, at the young age of 12. Ms. Brown spoke of marching to ensure that African Americans could exercise their right to vote-even in the face of a segregationist system that did all to make it impossible. She spent time with students after her presentation who purchased her book, My Selma and signed each copy as well. We would like to thank our PTA president, Ms. Gretchen Devinsky and the Montclair Booksellers for organizing such a wonderful event for our students.

[Willie Mae Brown, My Selma](#)

Student Council Candy Gram Sales:\$3

- Candy Grams will be handed out on Valentine's Day.

Renaissance Staff Participating in February Fitness Challenge:

This month, over 20 staff members volunteered to participate in a month's worth of fitness activities. Teachers were split into teams and compete in daily by completing various exercises for points. Our students have started to join hallway squat sessions, burpees for brain breaks, push ups before recess and more to encourage their teachers and/or favorite teams. Every Friday, Renaissance staff performs bonus exercises for additional points. There are 3 team captains, Mr. Colon (Alpha Wolf Squadron, Mr. Prasarn (Basement Beasts) and Mr. Gazzillo (No Squat Left Behind). Both the students and the staff are having a blast with this wonderful activity. As of today, Alpha Wolf Squadron is in the lead...by a substantial amount of points 😊

Staff Fitness Challenge

Renaissance UnPlugged: February 14, 2023

We ask that parents help us make our first Unplugged day a success by discussing with your children the positive impacts of connections when we spend less time on our devices. We encourage students to keep their phones (smartwatches and AirPods too) home or off for the day. Our staff has been encouraged to do the same. Students and staff will not have access to school-provided technology on our UNPLUG Day.

[Renaissance to UNPLUG on Feb. 14](#)

[Podcast: The Teenager Leading the Smartphone Liberation Movement](#)

[Screenagers Documentary](#)

[Sample Activities](#)

Renaissance Hosts School Tours for Incoming Students:

On February 7, 2023, Renaissance hosted Montclair families at our annual school tours night. I am proud to say that we had 17 staff members also attend tours. Members of our student council and NJHS stepped in as tour guides and did a fantastic job. I am constantly reminded of how special our students and staff are. Thank you to everyone who collaborated to make this evening informative and enjoyable for all. [Renaissance School Tours](#)

Renaissance Middle School Stem Fair: March 30, 2023 6-8pm- UPDATE

STEM Fair Update! While students are finalizing their topics for next week, we are planning the raffle baskets for the night of the Science Fair. If you would like to contribute to the STEM Fair

baskets we created an Amazon wishlist. Please contact Ms. Cullen with any questions or suggestions for our list.

[Science Fair Amazon Wish list](#)

[STEM Fair Student Packet](#)

Spanish: Juegos Olympicos:

On February 4, 2023, Students in Mr. A's Spanish classes participated in our annual Juegos Olympicos competition. Juegos Olímpicos, our Olympic Games provided students with opportunities to demonstrate, in Spanish, their skills in reading, translating and overall fluency.

[Juegos Olympicos](#)

A Message from Maggie Dock, Mental Health Coordinator for parents:

Good Afternoon MPS Parents/Caregivers,

I am pleased to invite all MPS parents/caregivers to learn about the Mental Health Association's *Mental Health & Suicide Awareness Educational Programs* that will be delivered to classrooms, throughout the district. The mission of the Mental Health Association is to promote mental health and reduce the stigma associated with emotional and mental disorders through advocacy, education, prevention, early intervention, treatment and service.

A parent/caregiver information meeting, during which you will learn about the programs being brought to our classrooms, is scheduled for Thursday, February 16, 2023 6:00pm-7:00pm at Edgemont Elementary School. Edgemont will be hosting the first "Gizmo" classroom programs, however, we invite everyone to join us as the programs described below will be offered to all district schools.

Middle/High School:

SOS Signs of Suicide (SOS) is a universal, school-based prevention program designed for middle school (ages 11-13) and high school (ages 13-17) students. The curriculum raises awareness about behavioral health and encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) when worried about themselves or their peers. Through a video and guided discussion, students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression.

A Message from SEPAC:

[Black to the Future](#)

[SEPAC Resource Fair](#)

6th Grade:

Students should bring their own water bottles and headphones to school regularly.

Students should also charge their Chromebooks every night.

Social Studies Update:

In Social Studies these past two weeks, students learned about the West African Kingdoms by first completing a WebQuest. Then, students were put into groups where they created presentations to teach their classmates about a specific topic assigned to each group. Presentations took place on Wednesday and Thursday of last week. Students are to prepare for an upcoming quiz next week on the West African Kingdoms by studying the Quizlet posted on Google Classroom.

7th Grade:

Students should have turned in their permission slips for the February and March trips. The total cost is \$10 for both, which can be paid now or on the trip date. Future slips will be coming, along with information on our end-of-the-year overnight trip to Philadelphia.

Students can keep their Chromebooks, WITH CHARGERS, at school in the Chromebook charger cart. They should always have their Chromebooks with them at school.

Tuesday, Feb 14 is Unplug It Day. No Chromebooks will be needed. 😊

Social Studies

The Puritan Colonies homework is due Mon-Tues, Feb 13-14.

Science

We have finished our Energy Unit and are moving into Earth Science!

8th Grade:

Field Research Trip

On February 17th, the 8th-grade students will be taking a trip to the Meadowlands Environmental Center in Lyndhurst, NJ. Students will be engaged with a morning/afternoon science workshop titled Biobasics. We are encouraging students to wear multiple layers as there will be outdoor components no matter rain/shine. Students also need to bring their own lunch to eat on site. Permission slips will come out the week of February 13th.

Math

We will be starting a unit on exponential growth within the next couple of weeks. If you feel comfortable talking to your child about saving for college and/or retirement and why you think it is better to start as early as possible, that would be a big help. The concept of long term compounding is much more important than the actual dollar figures.

Science

This week students learned our last learning goal in chemistry-the difference between the characteristics of an acid versus a base. Students learned how the ph scale works. They investigated a variety of unknown household substances and used litmus paper tests/ pH paper tests to indicate if something was either acidic/basic or neutral. We are wrapping up our semester in chemistry, and moving on to cell biology next. We begin with learning the parts of a compound light microscope and learn how to prepare a wet mount slide for viewing cells!

ELA

Students have been researching the topic of social media use amongst adolescents to write an argumentative essay. The essay is due on Monday, February 13th. Moving forward, we will start preparing for our next class novel: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

ELA/SS For the whole month of February, students will be working on a collaborative Social Studies and ELA project to analyze the Black experience in America from 1800 to the present day. In groups,

students will research a specific historical topic and create a newspaper that reports the experiences of African Americans.

GEOMETRY

We are going back to the old-fashioned way of note-taking as we work our way through triangles to our trigonometry unit, always the one that is most liked in the course.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We are beginning our new round of volunteering that started on February 10th by going to Toni's Kitchen. We will be going full force on February 24 with, hopefully, a couple of new partners in volunteering. It has been wonderful thus far!

Important Upcoming Dates:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ● February 1-March 1, 2023 | Black History Month |
| ● February 14, 2023 | UNPLUG Day @ Renaissance |
| ● February 20, 2023 | President's Day; School Closed |
| ● February 23, 2023 | Curriculum Thursday; 1:25 Dismissal |

[Renaissance Celebrates Black History](#)

Origins of Black History Month

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States.

That September, the Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and the prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and other peoples of African descent.