

DeSana Middle School Dragon Digest

Volume 1 Issue 2

Principal's Letter

Dear DeSana Parents & Students,

How is your young Dragon progressing so far this year in all of his/her classes? Next **Friday, September 2nd** marks the 4 ½ week juncture of this first semester, and thus, is a great time for parents to take note of how their middle schooler is starting off this school year in each class. While parents (and students!) may check their child's grades daily/weekly via Parent Portal . . . and we highly encourage you to do so . . . we will be sending home with students a paper copy Progress Report for each of their seven classes **on next Friday, September 2nd**. This will give you and your student an opportunity to see how he/she is progressing in each class. All students --- 6th, 7th & 8th graders --- will be given one Progress Report sheet from each core class (Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Literacy and Spanish for 8th graders who take it), as well as for their two Connections classes, that tells their class average thus far and how they have done on each formative and/or summative assessment.

We encourage parents to take a few minutes to sit down with his/her young Dragon to go over and discuss his/her academic progress thus far. Let us also give you a word of caution as you look at the averages for your child's classes at this 4 ½ week juncture. As you hopefully know, this first semester grading period is made up of an 18-week period, so this is just the one-quarter mark of the entire 18 week grading period. A student's average at this point may include few or not any summative assessments, which will count as 80% of his/her total average for the semester. Thus, your child's course average may be a bit skewed, one way or the other, depending on how many formative (which count 20% of a student's total average for the semester) and summative assessments have been given, and how your child has performed on any of the assessments given thus far.

Parents, please do not hesitate to contact any of your child's teachers should you have any questions or concerns about your young Dragon's academic progress for these first 4 ½ weeks. We appreciate your support so very much!

With warmest regards,
Terri A. North
Principal



Academics

Early Release Days for Forsyth County Schools

This year's FCS calendar has one (1) Early Release/Professional Learning Day . . . **next Wednesday, August 31st** . . . in addition to three (3) Early Release/Conference Days, with two conference days in October . . . **October 19th & 20th** . . . and one in March . . . **March 10th. Middle school students will be released at 1:30 PM** on all of these Early Release Days, and we hope that our DeSana parents will take advantage of these days by scheduling your child's doctor and dentist appointment on these afternoons in order to minimize time spent missing classroom instruction. During the afternoon of **August 31st**, all teachers and administrators will be involved in meaningful, professional learning and collaborative planning as they enhance their instructional knowledge, strategies and skills, and collaborate on our school improvement plan.

Grade Level eNewsletters

We know that many middle schoolers are not the best conduit of information about what is happening at school in all their different classes. *Itslearning* is a big help in reminding students about assignments and what they are studying in class, and also to parents, but we want to make sure that our parents are *in the know* about their child's academic endeavors, so that is why we will begin publishing our Grade Level eNewsletters starting the first of September. These eNewsletters are nothing fancy --- just the facts ---and are designed to give you a brief synopsis of what is happening in the four main content areas (five for 8th graders, which includes Spanish) . . . Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science . . . on a *monthly* basis. Each Grade Level eNewsletter (*eNews*, for short) may contain information about standards/topics/concepts being studied, formative and/or summative assessments coming up, project assignments, and/or reminders about other upcoming activities or events. So stay tuned as our first *eNews* will be coming your way electronically in the next couple of weeks!

Additional Oppportunity to Learn (AOL) Time

Has your child learned everything in their life the first time it was presented to them? Does your child really like to come in for early morning help sessions? Does your child really like to stay after school for help sessions? If the answer to any of these questions is "no" then Additional Opportunity to Learn (AOL) time will be great for your child. AOL is a 50 minute block of time that will happen first thing in the morning on Thursdays, and on some Wednesdays (9:00 – 9:50) beginning **Thursday, September 1st**. During this block of time, students have the opportunity to receive re-teaching from their teachers should they need it. If your child is struggling in a class or if they have received a low summative score, please encourage them to take advantage of AOL time!

GA Milestones/End of Grade Assessment Reports

End of Grade (EOG) Assessment Reports for 2015-16 are available for parents at Curriculum Night or **Friday, 8/26/16**, when your child arrives home. Parents will receive their child's **Individual Student Report**. This report provides information that describes how prepared he or she is to move on to the next grade level. In areas where your student did not demonstrate proficiency, we want to work together with you and your child to build their base knowledge and ability to demonstrate their grade-level proficiency or better.

For more detailed information regarding the Georgia Milestones EOG Assessment, please follow the link below to ***A Parent's Guide to the Individual Student Report for Elementary and Middle School End-of-Grade Assessments: Parent Guide EOG Brochure 2016.pdf***.

Coffee and Conversation Meetings for Parents

Perhaps you and your family just moved into our school district over the summer. Or maybe this past winter and spring your schedule was jam-packed and you did not have an opportunity to attend any of Ms. North's *General Information About DeSana* meetings, and/or the 6th grade parent night meeting – *All About Dragon Days & Dragon Lore*. Or maybe you just feel like you still need to understand a little better *The DeSana Way*. If any of these are the case, Ms. North will be hosting eight *Coffee & Conversation Meetings* during September and October, with each being grade level specific. During these hour long events, Ms. North will share with parents some of the same information she shared in her parent meetings last winter and spring, along with some events/activities/happenings to be *in the know* about during this first semester. Meeting dates are listed below, with all meetings being held in the media center from 6:30 – 7:30 PM. And coffee will be served!

- Thursday September 8th For Parents of **6D Team** Students
- Monday September 12th For Parents of **6M Team** Students
- Thursday September 15th **6th Grade** Make up Session
- Monday September 19th For Parents of **7D Team** Students
- Thursday September 22nd For Parents of **7M Team** Students
- Tuesday October 4th **7th Grade** Make up Session
- Thursday October 6th For Parents of **8D Team** Students
- Monday October 10th For Parents of **8D Team** Students

Counselors' Corner

We (Andrea Bell & Carolyn Moore) are the counselors at DeSana Middle School and we are so excited to be a part of this school's first year! We have already met some of our wonderful students and we will continue to meet them as we start classroom guidance and small groups. Counselors are here to help students emotionally and academically, and we are happy to help our Dragons succeed in every way! We are also starting a Mentoring Program that will be handled through the Counseling Department. If you are interested in being a mentor to a student at DeSana Middle, please contact Andrea Bell 770-667-2591 Ext. 491005, abell90@forsyth.k12.ga.us or Carolyn Moore 770-667-2591 Ext. 491007, cmoore29@forsyth.k12.ga.us. We are looking forward to a great year!



Athletics

Are You Ready for Some Football??!!

Be sure and mark your calendars for the first reeal home game of this season as our Dragons play on our **own** home field against the Otwell Bulldogs on **Tuesday, August 30th**. We want to christen our new field with a BIG W, so we need all our Dragon fans to be there, sporting your DeSana spirit wear and colors, and making some noise to help cheer our Dragons to a VICTORY!! Admission to games is \$3.00 for students and \$5.00 for adults. Students may stay after school and be supervised

by administrators and teachers until game time. They must have a permission form signed by their parent to do so. Permission forms will be on our DeSana website, under Athletics, by next Wednesday, and available in Dragon Time classrooms, as well as in the front office. So make your plans now to be at the DRAGON'S LAIR on **Thursday, August 30th!!**

Dragon Football Latest and Greatest

The Dragon football team has been working hard all season and it has shown on the field. Although we may have not had the outcomes we were hoping for, the team has never given up and is on the right path to their first victory. The team has been led by 8th graders Jeremy C., Jake S., and Mason H. Seventh graders Treston J., Elijah M., Hayden S. and Samuel L. have also been key contributors. The Dragons are looking forward to their first home game on **August 30**vs the Otwell Bulldogs at 5:30pm. Come out and support your team!
GO DRAGONS!!!!!!



Activities

Ms. North's Photography Club!

Clubs at DeSana will begin rolling out soon, and one of those to start right after Labor Day is Ms. North's Photography Club! Ms. North is looking for *photography enthusiasts* --- those who already know something about taking digital photographs and want to improve and those who don't know a thing but are excited about learning! The first club meeting will be on **Thursday, September 8th** from 8:00 - 8:45 in the media center. Students should come to the front office before that morning to get a pass to attend the meeting on the 8th. There will be 11 club meetings from **September 8th** until right before the Winter Break, six Saturday Photo Expeditions to places around the metro area (Think Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Zoo Atlanta, Waterfall Trekking in the North GA Mountains, Pooles Mill Bridge in North Forsyth, and some other fun and photographic spots!), which are all family affairs, and a culminating Photography Exhibition in mid-December! Mark your calendars with this date if you are interested in being a member of the DeSana Photography Club and stay tuned to morning announcements for more info about the first meeting! A packet of information, outlining all club meetings, photo expeditions, and information about the Photography Exhibition will be given out at this first meeting. Ms. North looks forward to seeing all the DeSana *photography enthusiasts* on the 8th!!

8th Grade Savannah Trip News

Attention all 8th graders and parents!!!! We are excited to announce the first ever DeSana 8th Grade Class Trip to Savannah, Georgia. Be a part of this exciting opportunity and get registered by **September 9, 2016**. On **May 10, 2017** we will load up on luxury charter buses and head south for 3 days of fun and learning. We will visit historical sites that we will study in class throughout the year,

take a haunted ghost trolley tour of one the spookiest places in Georgia and even ride on boats to look for dolphins. Information packets were sent home with students the first week of school. If you need an additional packet, please [click here](#) to find an additional copy of the registration packet. The cost of the trip is \$320.00 and includes all expenses except for shopping. To register your student please return the application and full payment of \$320.00 or a deposit of \$120.00 by **September 9**. If you have any questions about the trip please contact Mrs. Erin Wood at erinwood@forsyth.k12.ga.us or 770-667-2591 extension 492216.



Altruistic Endeavors

The Importance of Altruistic Endeavors

Altruistic Endeavors is one of the five key facets of our overall program. It is one of our core values, so to speak. We want our young Dragons to not only know what it is like to give back to their wonderful community and others, but to also experience it firsthand. Through many different DeSana service clubs, school wide chairitable endeavors, and our first DeSana Day of Good Deeds (or D3Day for short!) in the spring, we will work to provide our students with a variety of community service opportunities throughout the school year, in our local community, and in different parts of our country and the world.

So why encourage our young Dragons to get involved in community service? Well, first and foremost, it is the right thing to do; to learn to give freely and happily of one's time and talents and heart to help others, expecting nothing in return! But here are a few other reasons to consider encouraging your child to get involved in community service:

- To help someone in need.
- Those who give of themselves and their resources and help others, say they feel they receive a great feeling in return.
- Helping others can expand your world and help you better understand what is happening in your community.
- Meet new people and make new friends.
- To improve our world by caring for the environment.
- Giving back to one's community and others is an "added value" on your college resume.

Please check out opportunities for serving and helping others right here in the Dragon Digest and for students, on morning announcements!



Other Important Information

What is itslearning?

Itslearning is a learning management system (online platform) that allows teachers to have an online component alongside their traditional instruction. Not only can teachers post classroom content but they may also have students participate in online discussions, submit assignments, complete assessments, and create content. In addition to being a vital component for everyday teaching and learning, itslearning will also be utilized during any days missed due to unscheduled school closures (ex. inclement weather). Itslearning is also a communication tool for administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Additionally, teachers can utilize the recommendation engine to provide students with either remediation or enrichment on course standards.

What can I do as a parent?

In all courses, parents can monitor content assigned to their children through itslearning. Parents can log-in with the same credentials they use to get in Parent Portal or by using their child's log in information. **Here at DeSana we recommend using your child's log-in information. This will give you a little more access to things when you are trying to assist your child. Be sure to ask your child for their username and password.**

In both instances Parents can check the ***Lesson Planner*** section for the class lesson presented that day, see posted homework or posted 'no homework', see class resources used, class activities, and any information about upcoming tests, projects, and quizzes.

Using the student log-in will allow parents to find bulletins or reminders in individual courses. Parents can also find links to valuable resources that students may need throughout the year. This can include on-line text books and more.

How do I get there?

There are 2 easy ways to get there: 1. Go to <https://forsyth.itslearning.com>. Use your child's username and password to log-in. 2. Visit our DeSana Middle School web site and use the quick link at the top right to access itslearning. Again, use your child's username and password. If your child does not know their information, they can ask one of their teachers or go see Mr. Crowder, the DeSana Instructional Technology Specialist in his office located in the Media Center. This information cannot be emailed or given out over the phone. Having this information and checking it regularly are vital for helping your child succeed to the fullest at DeSana.

I still need help!

Visiting the DeSana Webpage will be your first step. On the right side under Quick Links is a link to valuable resources. These resources include print and video resources about using and navigating itslearning for both parents and students.

Mr. Crowder will also be providing (3) THREE FACE TO FACE PARENT TRAININGS. The dates of these are:

Saturday, September 3 9:00AM-11:00AM 1225 Computer Lab

Thursday, September 8 5:30PM-7:30PM 1225 Computer Lab

Thursday, September 22 5:30PM-7:30PM 1225 Computer Lab

These trainings will not last two hours. Drop in as you need to and get your questions answered.

Can't make a meeting? Call or email Mr. Crowder. 770-667-2591 Ext

491590 ncrowder@forsyth.k12.ga.us He will try to answer your question or set up a time to come in for help.

Parent Portal

Parent Portal is a great tool for parents to check grades, attendance and also see upcoming events for their student. If you don't have a Parent Portal Account, or if you forgot your password, please come to the DeSana front office with your identification and we will take care of you! Registering for Parent Portal is also how we obtain your e-mail address for all briefs including eNewsletters, the Dragon Digest, and county alerts.

News from the Cafeteria

The Dragon Café is off to a great start! Breakfast is served beginning at 8:15 every morning. This is a great opportunity for our students to start their day with a nutritious and healthy meal. For lunch we offer two hot entrée selections as well as salads and sandwiches. Fruits and vegetables are always included on our daily menu as well as fruit juice and several flavors of milk We look forward to serving our Hungry Dragons!

Loooooong Labor Day Weekend Approaching!

Monday, September 5th is Labor Day, which is a school holiday for all FCS students. That means an extra long weekend for all of our young Dragons and their families! Our school office will be closed and teachers and staff have the holiday off as well. Enjoy this extra day off . . . stay safe . . . and we look forward to seeing all of our young Dragons back at the Lair, safe and sound, on **Tuesday, September 6th**, ready to carry on with their learning!

Announcing WOOF WOOF WEDNESDAYS!

In case you do not know, Ms. North is an avid dog lover! She loves all kinds of dogs . . . all breeds and all shapes and sizes . . . but is especially partial to her beagle named Brady, and is growing VERY fond of our Desana service dog, Frosty! So beginning **Wednesday, September 7th**, DeSana will begin celebrating ALL of our *Dragon Dogs* by hosting *Woof Woof Wednesdays* in the morning carpool line. From 8:30 – 9:00 AM, on these *Woof Woof Wednesdays*, Ms. North, or another Desana staff member, will be giving away doggie treats to every friendly *Dragon Dog* that comes through the line as parents drop off their young Dragon for school. So tell your four-legged furry friend(s) that he/she gets to go for a ride every Wednesday morning and get a treat! What better way to start out the morning for your best furry friend!!

Important Reminder About Free & Reduced Meal Applications

Parents, we encourage you to complete a Free and Reduced-Priced meal application on-line, if you have the need, at <http://schoolmealapp.forsyth.k12.ga.us>. The application is easy to complete and can

be processed quickly, with results usually in one day. On-line applications also help cut down on meal charges because paper applications can take as long as 10 days to process. *A NEW Free & Reduced meal application must be completed each year **prior to September 15th**.* If you have any questions, please call Joe Sanders at 770-888-3473 extension 202427 or email at jsanders@forsyth.k12.ga.us.

SAFETY IS . . . And Always WILL BE . . . Our #1 PRIORITY At DeSana!

Please know that providing a safe and secure environment at DeSana for our students and staff is our #1 Priority Each and every day! We know that if our students do not feel safe, then learning cannot take place for our students. Forsyth County Schools and DeSana Middle School have many practices and procedures in place to help safeguard your child every minute of every day to, from and on campus. Detailed safety plans for all kinds of emergencies have been carefully planned, written, shared with staff, and put in place, and will be practiced frequently with our staff and students as we begin this school year. We will continue to practice these drills in an organized way, and as if they were the real thing, throughout the school year.

DeSana has a School Resource Officer (SRO), Deputy Stephen Lavin. He is on our campus on a regular basis, checking on things, talking to our students, and getting to know them. All middle schools in the district now have a front entrance with a "buzz-in" and intercom feature for entrance after students have entered for the morning. All visitors must come to this single door and be buzzed in by a front office secretary who has a wide view of the entire person and the surrounding area. Strict and technologically-sophisticated sign-in procedures for visitors, once they are buzzed in, are in place, and a driver's license is required to check out a student.

Some of DeSana's standard operating procedures are to have our head custodian check the entire facility and campus early each morning to look for any unusual objects. Phones are in every classroom, and administrators in constant communication with each other, our SRO, and the front office through radios, as well as with the school district's safety office via the use of cell phones. Our school phones come equipped with sophisticated technology that allows for tracing phone calls in the event of a bomb threat or other threatening phone calls.

Our FCS Code of Conduct prohibits students from wearing over-length, over-sized, and baggy clothing, including coats inside the building, so that weapons and other contraband are less likely to be hidden on students. The FCS Dress Code is enforced at DeSana.

All Forsyth County school buses are equipped with two-way radios so that they can be in constant communication with the transportation department and the school. They are also equipped with GPS so that bus locations may be tracked at all times.

Diligent supervision of our students by our entire staff, from the moment they step foot on campus until they leave, is a daily practice. Talking to our students about safety being a top priority, and letting them know that it is their responsibility also to let an adult know immediately if they see or hear something that could jeopardize this safety, is a practice we began the first week of school, and we will continue to preach throughout the school year. Rest assured any information of this nature that is shared with an administrator, counselor or teacher is held in strictest confidence.

These are just some of the practices and procedures we have in place. We hope you will spend some time with your middle schooler over the next few days and throughout the year discussing the importance of all these safety procedures, and let him/her know that it is also your expectation that he/she take personal responsibility in reporting anything he/she sees or hears that could jeopardize the safety of any or all of our students and staff.

We encourage you, parents, that any time you have concerns about the safety or well-being of your child, you will not hesitate to call a DeSana administrator to discuss these concerns. We want Desana to be a place where all students, staff and parents feel safe and comfortable. But we need *everyone's help* to keep it that way throughout this school year. Thanking you in advance for your help and support when it comes to the safety of our children!



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