

Brookfield Effingham New Durham Ossipee Tuftonboro Wolfeboro

*Kingswood Regional Middle School
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*Kirkland O. Ross
Principal*

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Summer 2011

Dear Vista Seventh Grade Students,

On behalf of Ms. Peterson, Ms. Drennan, Mr. Ramsay, and Mrs. Warren, I welcome you to the start of two fabulous years on Team Vista. We are looking forward to our new combination of teachers and students and are planning many exciting activities. The teachers include: Mr. Bert Ramsay, math and algebra and basecamp teacher for Kilimanjaro; Ms. Lynn Peterson, English and basecamp teacher for Everest; Ms. Erin Drennan Doiron, science and basecamp teacher for Matterhorn; Mrs. Mercedes Warren, special education teacher and me, Arthur Viens, social studies and reading workshop and basecamp teacher for Denali. Advisors include: Mrs. Kathy Kenney and Mr. Charlie Edson, technology. Here's a special message from the Unified Arts Team:

Being prepared for class is very important for you to achieve success in your learning. While at KRMS, you will be involved in Unified Arts as well as classes. Students are expected to attend Unified Arts classes with their 3-ring UA notebook, tool kit, agenda book, and reading workshop book. Your Unified Arts classes may require materials not specified here. Your UA teachers will explain what you may need when classes begin. Please note that band and chorus meet every other day, but the rest of your UA classes meet daily.

—Mrs. Souza and the Unified Arts Team

We have developed a number of very successful educational experiences that go beyond the walls of the traditional classroom that engage you with a variety of different projects, novels, speakers, field studies, and trips. We believe knowledge is interrelated and mirrors real-life. You will be responsible for individual activities and projects and will be expected to interact with other students and adults in small and whole-group collaborative settings.

Eight critical life skills continually surface in Vista activities: communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, leadership, organization and management, decision-making, and problem solving. We provide opportunities for you to practice these skills at school and at home. Your success depends on three important elements: individual motivation, teacher support and facilitation, and the daily involvement with your parents or guardians. We, as teachers, recognize that parents play an important role in the educational success of each Vista student. Commit to learning and sharing new things as a family. Make reading for pleasure and information a family

activity. One thing that makes teaching so exciting for us is what we learn as the year progresses. Learning is truly a lifelong process.

The first day of school this year is **Tuesday, September 6, 2011**. Don't forget to bring all your required materials for the first day. **Another mailing will be sent by the school that will include all the supplies and forms for the opening of school.** This letter and supply list as well as all future handouts will be posted on our class blog. Go to:

<http://ajviens.edublogs.org>

The blog has lots of features including work from last year; district calendar; Google calendar of team activities, dates, and assignments; and copies that you can print for reading workshop, summer letters; and coming soon, fall overnight permission slips and gear lists. **All of these forms will be posted by the beginning of August if not before.**

Two other important dates are **Thursday and Friday, September 22-23**. For these two days, Vista will be on our Annual Fall Overnight to the White Mountains. The trip features a variety of academic and team building activities. All students are required to attend; no one will be staying behind at school. More information about specific activities will be coming home on the first day of school. The other date to keep in mind is our **annual spring hiking trip scheduled for June 2012**. The cost of this trip ranges from \$150 to \$180 depending on our fundraising efforts for the year. More information about the trip will be sent home in September. To be prepared for these trips, science field studies, and weekly nature observations in the field all year long, three items are crucial to success and safety: a **sturdy pair of hiking boots that come over the ankle (winter boots are required for cold weather); rain jacket and pants that are completely waterproof, seam-sealed, and large enough so that other layers can be worn under them; a day pack large enough to carry rain gear, food, water, journal, tool kit, and extra clothes.** These three items are needed during the first week of school and every Friday all year long. They will also be needed on the overnight to the White Mountains on September 22-23. Rain gear is available from the team. All we ask is that the rain gear be returned in June washed and in excellent condition. The supply is limited, and forms go out on the first day of school.

If you sign up to participate in football, field hockey, boys or girls soccer or cross-country, you **MUST** have a physical examination before you can participate in that sport. Practices begin early, so it is best to schedule your exam early, get physically prepared, and find out when your sport begins.

Don't forget to bring your G-mail and Web 2.0 permission slip, and the Vista Off-Campus Permission Slip with you to school on the first day; **both sheets will be included in a future mailing in August.**

We have many special activities planned for the beginning of the year. We begin the year with a very special opening ceremony to welcome all of you to the team. Our eighth graders, teachers, and advisors on Vista all take part in the ceremony.

I hope that everyone is having a relaxing and rewarding summer. Be ready to: grow as a person; work with and meet new people; try new things that you thought were impossible for you to do; climb mountains; see the beauty in nature; learn more about the world both past and present; grow as a reader, writer, speaker, mathematician, scientist, historian, geographer, and thinker; and have lots of fun along the way. Eighth graders know that on Vista, we like to laugh, play, have fun, and learn at the same time. Learning and having fun go together; we would not have it any other way.

Finally, always remember that one of the most important things about Vista is community. Community defines Vista and Vista works on building our community all year long. Being part of a community means that you are a part of something—something bigger than yourself. It means being accepted by its members just the way you are. It takes time and effort to build community. We do it in advisory, in classes, in basecamps, on Friday hikes, trips off campus, at lunch, and moments when we least expect it. We have many rituals and ceremonies that are part of community building and we are always coming up with new ones. The forming of groups in a circle is an important one. In a circle we all are equals and respectful of one another. We can all see each other's faces and listen facing a speaker. We come to the circle an individual but the geometry of it makes us a part of the community of Vista. As you go through the school year, you will undoubtedly move around the circle as you grow, mature, and experience new things, but the nature of the circle always keeps you part of the community on this journey. I leave you with this quote:

'Home is where—when no one else wants you—they have to take you in.' That's what community is all about. When you are part of a community and you get together with that community, it feels like you have come home—home, where you are loved and wanted, home, where you are known and appreciated, home, where you feel deeply connected to others...

—Howard Hanger and Vicki Garlock
From *A Precious Window of Time*

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at home at: ajviens@gmail.com.

Yours truly,

Arthur J. Viens, Jr.

Team Leader

Social Studies, Outdoor Education, and Reading Workshop Teacher, Team Vista

Remember, the school will be sending out a second mailing with all the forms for the opening of school; expect this mailing in early August. I will try and post as many of these forms on my blog. Go to: <http://ajviens.edublogs.org>