



Shepaug Valley Middle School

NEWSLETTER

February 2012

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Shepaug family:

I hope each of you has had a good start to the new year.

You recently received a letter indicating that the PTO will sponsor *The Courage To Speak Presentation* in the spring. Your response has been overwhelming. The cost of the parent presentation is \$1,000 and \$500 has already been donated towards this program. Thank you for your support!

I would like to remind families that in five weeks, students will take the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). As indicated in the letter that was sent home in the fall, all middle school students will take the 2011 CMT starting March 1 through March 20. Additional days will be used if needed. This yearly test (grades 3-8) is given to assess student knowledge in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science (grades 5 and 8 only). Please do not schedule appointments during the testing days.

Students will be given the practice test on March 1 that they can take home to show you. We are required to have students make up any test sessions that are missed due to absences. This will require removal from class. The testing schedule is shown under the calendar of events section of this page. Please be mindful that it is important for students to be well rested and eat a nutritious breakfast.

If you have any questions regarding the CMT, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With warm regards,

Calendar of Events

February 7.....PTO meeting @ 9:30 a.m.
February 7.....Interim Reports
February 10.....6th Grade Social 2:30 – 4:15 p.m.
February 17.7/8th Dance 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
February 20.....No school

CMT Schedule for March

March 1 Practice Test
March 6 Direct Assessment of Writing
March 7 Math 3
March 8 Reading Comprehension 1
March 9 Math 2
March 13 Reading Comprehension 2
March 14 Editing & Revising
March 15 Math 1
March 16 DRP
March 20 Science (Grade 8 only)

Faculty Spotlight...Welcome Nurse Edi



Nurse Edi graduated from Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing and is a certified school nurse. She has served as an instructor for nursing students for many years, but has returned to her true passion of being a school nurse. She is also a certified phlebotomist. On a personal level, she is married and has two children and two grandchildren. We are so pleased to have her join our staff!

We have seen recent cases of Mono in both the middle and high school students. MONO (Mononucleosis) is an infectious viral disease (Epstein-Barr virus) that is transmitted by hand-to-mouth or mouth-to-mouth contact. It is highly contagious and mainly transmitted by a person's saliva/mucus. Sharing of drinking cups, juice boxes, food/utensils, straws, lipstick is also a common way that a person can contract the disease. The incubation period can be anywhere from 4-7 weeks. The disease can linger from a few weeks to several months. The symptoms of Mono are: fever, sore throat, enlarged and tender lymph nodes of the neck, swollen tonsils, skin rash, fatigue, and an enlarged spleen causing tenderness to the abdomen. There is no specific treatment. However, it is important to increase rest periods and decrease physical activity to lessen the chance of injury to the spleen. Also, it is important to increase fluid intake. Because the throat is sore and it is difficult to swallow, the chance of the person becoming dehydrated is greater. If you or your child exhibits any of these symptoms, or you have any further question/concerns please contact your physician. Blood work can be done to determine if the illness is diagnosed as Mono.



Principal's Wall of Fame

Each month, grade level teams select students to be honored as *Students of the Month*. Students who are selected have demonstrated outstanding academic scholarship or have shown significant effort and improvement in their studies. Student photos are placed on the *Principal's Wall of Fame* in the main office. Students and families are invited to attend a breakfast with the principal at the beginning of the month in which they are celebrated.

Students of the Month for February 2012

- Grade 6: Brendan McKenney & Avery Serra
- Grade 7: Claire Lyons & Jared Block
- Grade 8: Rachel Genua & Michael Goccia

Character Tree



November Students of the Month



December/January Students of the Month

The following students received character leaves during the months of December and January for demonstrating a character trait; honesty, caring, responsibility, courage, respects or citizenship.

*Congratulations to:
Dylan Bennett,
Alexander Fowler,
Jessica Robbins.*



Geography Bee

The sixth annual Middle School Geography Bee was a success. We had 27 students that participated in the preliminary rounds. They each were very serious, and carefully thought out each question before answering. We were very impressed with their geographic knowledge!

When the preliminary rounds were over, we were left with 7 finalists. Representing grade six were Zachary Bowman and Charlie Oliver, for grade 7 we had Josh Jordan, Jahred Martin and Patrick Mullen, and the grade 8 finalists were Lawrence Andrea and Ed Wolfe. The rounds of questions were much more difficult than those of the preliminary rounds and presented in a variety of ways, but each of these students continued to come up with great answers.

At the end of the Finalist Round, Josh Jordan and Patrick Mullen tied for third place. After the Championship Round was completed, Lawrence Andrea took second place, and Charlie Oliver became our new Middle School Geography Bee Champion. Charlie took a written test which has been sent to the state of Connecticut, and we will hear in March if he has been chosen to compete at the state level. Mrs. Hopkins is pictured below with this year's champion.

Each of these students should be complimented for a great job. We are looking forward to seeing all of the sixth and seventh graders that participated this year for another great competition next year. Study those geography facts!



Guidance News

Please help us welcome Pauline Goncalves who will be conducting her Practicum with the guidance department during the next few months. Pauline Goncalves is currently a student at Western Connecticut State University where she is pursuing a Masters in School Counseling. Her projected graduation date is May 2113. Pauline is a resident of Bridgewater, CT. Pauline is a certified elementary teacher (K-6). She also has her Masters degree in special education. Pauline previously taught 2nd grade in Bethel, CT for two years and 3rd grade in Regional School District 13 for one year. Pauline is looking forward to meeting our students, faculty, parents, and the members of our school community

8th Grade Presentations

We recently had a visit from three Corrections Officers who work at the Garner Correctional Institution in Newtown. They were recommended by an 8th grade parent who works in another school district. The officers have a passion for talking to young people about decision-making. The name of their program is the *Turning Point – If I Knew Then What I Know Now*. Their talk encompassed the following: decision-making, misuses of *Facebook*, bullying, respectbeing aware of one's surroundings, doing the right thing, looking out for one another and surrounding oneself with positive people. In addition, local Resident Trooper, Steve Sordi, is scheduled to spend the day with us on February 9th. Every year, Trooper Sordi meets with 8th graders to talk to them about the law and sexual harassment. He also touches upon cyber safety.

WELCOME

8th Grade Guidance and Healthy Living Class Initiative

Middle School Health Instructor Heather Hurley has identified a clear learning need from the 8th grade health class students in the general area of **Identity** or “who are we really”? This includes Self-Awareness, Self Esteem and most specifically for female students: Body Image. In our conversations this fall, we came up with a plan to give a basic grounding in these issues by dividing the unit into four consecutive classes. In order to minimize distractions which always abound when these matters are discussed in a coeducational classroom, the boys and girls addressed these topics in separate settings. In addition to this change in setting, we also invited volunteer upper classmen from Shepaug High School to be available for any questions and validation of the issues which they have personally worked through as former middle school students.

For the boys’ classes, we had one junior and three senior volunteer students who provided their 8th grade counterparts with a student’s eye perspective on self-esteem, respect and what it takes to make a successful transition to high school. This was interwoven with Mr. Snow’s (School Social Worker is pictured below with two high school boys) breaking down *Identity* into four parts including:

1. **How we see ourselves**
2. **How others see us**
3. **How we think others see us**
4. **How we really are**



We stressed a consistent responsibility to ourselves and to the community at Shepaug to become more aware of these components through attention to feedback that we receive. Students were encouraged to accept that when *mistakes* do happen, they *are a never wasted just so long as they are followed by learning and change.*

The girls’ classes joined together to discuss what to expect in high school as well. Shepaug Valley High School Seniors, Libby Eichen and Mathi Smith led the girls in open discussions on body image, healthy relationships, and other current issues that the girls deemed important to their age group. It was truly a pleasure to watch our high school students and 8th graders work together.

Helping Hands News

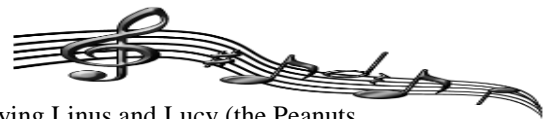
Greetings from the Helping Hands members who are working hard to collect tabs for our annual tab drive. The tabs collected will be donated to people who need dialysis or cancer treatments. So... please remember to save the tabs on the tops of your cans.

Earth Day is coming around the corner. Helping Hands members are gearing up for a fun and informative day with presentations, skits and cleaning. Feel free to come join us on the day we remind everyone to be kind to the earth year-round. Do you have something to contribute on that day? Drop us an email on holmesl@region-12.org.

We would love to start a community garden in the spring. Are there any avid farmers who would like to contribute their time, expertise and/or supplies? Let us know. Thanks for your support, as always.

Strings News

Strings video podcast planned for early February. The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade strings classes will be making video recordings to be posted securely for families to view. The 8th graders will be playing Linus and Lucy (the Peanuts theme song). The 7th grade students will be playing Pachelbel’s Canon and selections from the book showing their work on sixteenth notes. The sixth grade string students will play pieces from the method book using eighth notes, faster tempos, and a wider range of notes. All of the middle school string classes have been making good progress, and we look forward to the opportunity to share that work with parents using this technology.



Yearbook on Sale Now

We want to make sure that you are aware that there is still time to purchase a yearbook for your child.

The Shepaug Valley Middle School yearbook committee is excited about this year’s yearbook; bursting with **color** photos, student portraits, activities, highlights, and of course, space for special autographs. We’re sure that your child will want a yearbook to look back on these special memories.

As you make choices about purchases for your child, please consider the long-term value of a yearbook. For the price of a CD or a few music downloads, your student can have a book that captures **forever** the special events of the year. A yearbook grows more valuable over time. Can you say the same thing about a CD or a music download?

Make sure your child doesn’t miss out on this opportunity! To order a yearbook(s) for your child, please complete and return the Yearbook Order Form listed below with \$25.00 before February 28 or \$30.00 after February 28. Act fast, the deadline to order is **March 18, 2011**.

It’s been a great year so far—and we look forward to an equally great yearbook!

Sincerely,

Betsy O’Neill
Yearbook Advisor



Yearbook Order Form

Child’s Name: _____

Homeroom: _____

HIGHLIGHTS FROM TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION.....

6th Grade Technology Education

Having completed the Superclip assignment, the 6th graders designed and produced a wooden toy car using the standard system of measurement. Students constructed working toy cars to specific requirements. They determined the mass of each car and compiled overall dimensions for each car using the Standard System of Measurement. As a first step, students drew the front view indicating the center points of the axle and window holes as well as identifying the design for the finale car. This drawing showed all the cuts and holes that are to be drilled. The wooden blank was then cut to the correct length and all the cuts and holes were laid out and drilled using the drill press and cut to size using a scroll saw. The finished car was fitted with axles and wheels.

The students will evaluate their finished assignment with the completion of a reflection sheet. This required them to compare their product to the original drawing and judge the overall appearance of the Superclip. Students are also asked to explain the steps and tools that they used in the production of the clip. The final reflection is to select a step that they would do differently if they were to repeat all the production steps. The final assignment for those students that had finished the car was to construct a bench using already prepared templates. Students cut the pieces to size using a scroll saw, sanded and assembled the bench.

7th Grade Technology Education - Shakers as Builders

Having completed the Shaker clock assignment, students were given the choice of making a Shaker bench or a Shaker peg shelf. Each product reflects the style of Shaker furniture. The individual pieces were formed from rough lumber, cut to size, sanded and assembled.

Upon completion, students are given a written assessment and have to explain how the product they made reflects the Shaker values listed in their journals. They will also use the Metric and Standard measuring systems to determine the overall size of the finished product. In the final section, they will have to evaluate the different woodworking aspects that were used to complete the assignment.

8th Grade Technology Education - Engineering by Design

Students have been studying the history and theory behind rocket and airplane technology. Students first constructed working models of rockets. The “fuel” used to propel these rockets was compressed air and water. Students then moved to the construction of a solid fuel model rocket. The rocket was made from cardboard 8 ½” x 11 “paper and gummed tape. Following the instructions yielded a complete model rocket with a recovery streamer. The next unit had students building a balsawood and paper model airplane that uses a propeller that is powered by an elastic band. Students constructed the airplanes then flew them in the school mall. Using the trial and error method of problem solving the students added trim tabs to the wings and tail to increase the lift and extend the flight time. Times were recorded and the students will evaluate the flights that their planes made.





Blue Team News

(Mrs. Barksdale, Mrs. Beilinson, Mrs. Roberti, Mrs. Weik)

The New Year brings promises and resolutions for us all. Even our young people can benefit from assessing their strengths and weaknesses and setting personal goals. Please help your child to organize his/her binders and backpacks. Don't forget to replenish the supply of pencils, pens, and paper. The sixth grade team wishes everyone a successful start to 2012.

Humanities with Mrs. Weik

Having so recently studied the traditions and holidays of other cultures, students spent time before vacation looking at traditions celebrated in their own families. We learned a lot about various traditions in your homes--from summer vacations, Thanksgiving feasts, and Christmas celebration. Students enthusiastically used specific details to show us what it's like to be a part of these special traditions. The final drafts of these essays are on display in the MS hallway with original watercolor cover art.

The culmination of the Asian culture unit is fast approaching. Teams have been studying the geography, government, economy, religion and other cultural elements of focus countries including Japan, China, Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Please join us for a celebration of our learning on February ninth and tenth. Students will dress up, prepare food, and present their findings during a Culture Fair. Watch for the invitation in the Tuesday folder.

Science with Mrs. Barksdale

Your sixth grade hydrologists have just discovered some properties of water. They have mastered the microscope...its parts and their functions, as well as how to regulate light and focus. Then they microscopically observed some fixed pond water protozoan's (spirogyra, amoeba, volvox, etc.). They are now investigating ground water and surface water and what types of soils attribute to this designation. They are working collaboratively in small groups to design an experiment around a question they generated about soil. They are writing their own procedures and will carry out the experiment. As they collect data, they will create a data table and graph depicting their results. Ultimately, our 6 grade scientists will communicate their findings in a formal lab report. Please encourage your child to use the lab report for "Unknown Metals" as a reference.

Mathematics with Mrs. Barksdale

Our sixth grade mathematicians just completed a unit on decimals and are now exploring fractions. They are converting fractions into decimals and decimals into fractions. They can find prime factorization for numbers. Using their knowledge of factorization, they are able to reduce fractions and find equivalents. We are continuing the use of "Warm Up" problems to constantly review math concepts we have mastered thus far. Our students continue to be very engaged and active learners.

Spanish with Mrs. Roberti/Holst-Grubbe

Sixth grade Spanish classes are ending their journey through Spain this term. As we move towards Mexico, we must quickly learn new classroom and bedroom vocabulary, how to express our "wants" and "needs", and finally, how to describe what we want and need to do. In addition, we have been introducing proper use of vocabulary and grammatical topics such as pronouns, infinitives, the verbs: "hay, querer, tener, & necesitar" and an in-depth study of interrogatives; whereby we practice both posing and responding to oral questions. We also have a fun project coming up: our ideal bedroom! Imagine trees and a hammock for your bed, or a television that takes up a whole wall space! So hold on tight, our next journey is just beginning...



White Team News

(Mrs. Holst-Grubbe, Mrs. Hopkins, Mr. Parkosewich, Mr. Scarola, Ms. Zenobi)

Grade 6

English with Mrs. Zenobi

In 6th grade, as we wrap up our Asian unit with a presentation and have a fun Asian food day, we will begin February with some non-fiction reading material about Mexico. This corresponds to the Latin American Unit in social studies. Using this background knowledge, we will begin *Crossing the Wire*, an exciting story of a young Mexican immigrant. All students will be asked to make connections to the main character that is trying to make improvements in his life and trying to fit in. We will also continue to work on parts of speech and punctuation.

Mrs. Hopkins' Social Studies with Mrs. Hopkins

The social studies classes are studying the cultures of India and Pakistan, and learning about the religions that found their roots in this part of Asia: Hinduism and Buddhism. We are also working with Mrs. Zenobi on our culminating Asian studies project. Each student has chosen an Asian country, and is doing research on the geography, government, and economy of that country. They may also research the history and/or flag of their country for extra credit. This information has to be compiled on a poster or power point to be used during their presentation to the class. We can't wait to see how creative they are presenting their countries' information.

Science with Mr. Parkosewich

6th grade Science students will dive into the study of water and how its unique chemical and physical properties affect us every single day of our lives. As you know water supplies are limited, so by unit's end our students will appreciate how, "Water is the next oil".

Mathematics with Mr. Scarola

6TH Grade Mathematics Students are finishing chapter 4 titled NUMBER THEORY & FRACTIONS. Students should be able to use divisibility rules to break down any number into a product of its prime factors. This means that we understand that 100 break down into $2 \times 2 \times 5 \times 5$. We also have studied Fraction Concepts by converting fractions to equivalent fractions and decimal fractions. We worked with mixed numbers and improper fractions. We practiced adding and subtracting fractions with like and unlike denominators. Finally we studied estimating with fractions. Please use the available video tutorials, homework help online, interactive practice quizzes, and interactivities. These resources are amazing.

Grade 7

Language Arts with Mrs. Zenobi

In 7th grade, we will be improving our timed persuasive prompts in anticipation of the CMT's. We will also begin reading a variety of non-fiction material. 7th graders will continue with grammar review as well. By the end of February, the 7th graders will have the opportunity to create their own poems as we begin our poetry unit.

Social Studies with Mrs. Hopkins

We are in the middle of our medieval studies with each student being involved in researching a medieval topic they have chosen to present as a possible display to the Musee National du Moyen Age in Paris, France. Please check my web page to see any necessary directions, focus questions, rubrics and upcoming check point due dates for the project.

While students are becoming experts on their chosen topic, we are studying the importance of religion, gothic architecture, and cathedrals during the Middle Ages, and then will be investigating how the Crusades and other historical events impacted the growth of cities, and how nations started to develop. As always,

there is an assignment sheet to follow, articles to read, guided reading sheets, and worksheets. Be sure that these are being kept organized in a notebook.

Mathematics with Mr. Scarola

7th Grade Mathematics Students are working on applying algebraic concepts. We have started linear functions and will be quickly moving into slope and rate of change. Slope intercept form will be developed; we will then study direct and inverse variation. Please use the available video tutorials, homework help online, interactive practice quizzes, and interactivities. These resources are amazing.

Science with Mr. Parkosewich

For the next several weeks 7th grade students will delve into the wonderful world of the human body. Make no bones about it, they will be studying the skeletal system then pump it up both with the muscular and circulatory systems. Next, if they can stomach it, the digestive system and finally they can breathe a little easier with the fascinating respiratory system.

French with Mme. Rogers

Seventh grade French students finished off the month of December continuing to follow the adventures of their French “friends” in Poitiers as they learned how to talk about their classes and faced some typical teen-age school situations. They discussed the French educational system and compared it to their own, while learning the necessary vocabulary to talk in detail about their own classes. They honed their skills with the irregular verb “avoir” (to have) as well as with telling time and mentioning the day(s) their classes meet. By the end of the chapter, they were able to juggle adjective agreements, colors, and demonstrative adjectives. They also learned about Christmas traditions in France, watched a video on Christmas carols and wrote their own Christmas card to the Père Noël reviewing the vocabulary and structures taught in Chapter 1 and 2, and expressing their likes and dislikes. We started Chapter 4, watched the chapter video. We learned how to make a *Galette des Rois*, and sang the song “*J’aime la Galette*”. We are going to review the usage of *er* verbs and use them as we send our French correspondent a Valentine Card. Please continue to remind your students that everything is cumulative in a foreign language class and that it’s very important to do homework carefully and thoughtfully each night. Merci! Bonne année 2012 and Joyeux jour de la St. Valentin!

Spanish Mrs. Holst-Grubbe

Seventh grade Spanish classes have recently completed work on telling time and discussing at what time various events take place. Our primary focus was school and classes, and we spent a large part of January discussing school schedules. In February, Spanish students will be introduced to a variety of different adjectives to describe their friends, family members, classes, and teachers. During the upcoming month they formally are introduced to all the subject pronouns in Spanish as well as the use and conjugation of the irregular verb “ser.” They will then be combining verb and adjective forms to address subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement. Upon completion of this lesson, students will continue with a review and some cultural activities on México followed by a comprehensive test before beginning the next unit where they will continue to follow the adventures of their Mexican “friends” from Cuernavaca. “¡México es muy interesante y divertido!”



Red Team News

(Mrs. Dougherty, Mrs. Homberg, Ms. MacSweeney, Mrs. Maher, Mrs. Rogers)

Grade 8 News

The eighth grade has planned two field trips for the end of the year. April 23rd eighth graders will be traveling to Boston where they will tour the Boston Science Museum and walk the Freedom Trail, ending with a bit of shopping at Quincy Market. Buses will be leaving Shepaug at 6:30 AM and returning at approximately 8:00 PM.

Our end of the year trip will be the annual excursion to Holiday Hill, a resort in Cheshire Connecticut, on June 11th. Mark your calendars now.

More details about these trips will follow in your Tuesday folders.

Language Art and Social Studies

Immersed in an interdisciplinary unit throughout December and the beginning of January, eighth grade language arts/social studies classrooms were busy with the topics of eugenics and capital punishment. Our students completed an interesting science fiction novel by Lois Lowry titled *The Giver*. This is the story of a young boy in a futuristic society where “sameness” prevails in a genetically engineered community. Students were full of interesting questions about this Newbury Award winning novel. They were intrigued by the subject matter, and interested to know that it was not as far-fetched as one might think. At the same time, students in social studies classes were beginning their unit on rights and responsibilities according to the Constitution. After extensive research on their topics students were able to make connections between the novel and rights and responsibilities that they have today. In addition, students examined both ethical and moral implications, as well as its effect on the society in *The Giver*. A short debate enabled students to view both topics from several perspectives. Persuasive essays were then written either supporting or opposing a particular aspect of capital punishment or eugenics. It was both fun and interesting to work with your students throughout this challenging unit.

Over the next few week, students in social studies classes are studying the making of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Students in language arts classes are writing narratives that answer the following questions:
What memories have inspired you to become the person you are today?
What person has made this memory possible?

Mathematics with Mrs. Maher

In Pre-Algebra, we are working on fraction and decimal operations. We are also graphing lines using a table. In Algebra, we are working on writing equations of parallel and perpendicular lines. We are also solving inequalities in one and two variables. All of the 8th grade mathematicians are busy learning new things and expanding their knowledge of previously learned concepts!

Science with Ms. MacSweeney

Eighth grade science students have wrapped up their study of astronomy. They are well versed in the reasons for the seasons, as well as why the moon changes phase, and what causes eclipses and tides. We will now be entering the cell. Students will learn the structure and function of the basic units of life through a hands-on, collaborative approach. They will perform an “eggcellent” experiment to find out how substances enter and leave cells and learn about other cell processes in this study of the very small. Please check the eighth grade science homework online and look for links and handouts to help your budding scientist!

French with Mme. Rogers

In December our French students completed their chapter 5 on functioning in a French café, reading a menu, ordering food and beverages, expressing their likes and dislikes and tasting authentic French lemonade! They also discovered how the French celebrate Christmas. They listened to French carols, responded to Holidays cards they received from their French correspondents in Toulouse. They watched with interest pictures of our correspondents, making a French Christmas log” *bûche de Noel*”. With a partner they became designers, creating a fun power point presentation on clothing they wear to go to a formal dinner, a concert, a Halloween party and also suggesting a new uniform for our school. In the process they followed a rubric asking them to reuse vocabulary and structure taught in Chapter 4 and 5 with an emphasis on the near future and adjective agreements.

We started the New Year making plans and discovering what the French do in their leisure activities and spare time. We watched the video of our last Chapter in our book (Chapter 6) “*Amusons nous*” “*Let’s have fun*” and discovered some additional irregular verbs (*prendre and vouloir*) which we used with question words in positive and negative sentences. We had fun interviewing Hugues an exchange student from Liege Belgium who visited our class. We are going to send Valentine cards to our French correspondents and learn how the French celebrate Valentine Day. *Joyeux St. Valentin!*

Spanish with Mrs. Roberti and Mrs. Holst-Grubbe

Eighth grade Spanish students have been exploring members of the extended family, and have expanded our ability to discuss characteristics about those people. Our culminating activity for this unit involved a group project that resulted in the creation of a photo album describing and depicting several members of a “fantasy family” tree. Additionally, students have been challenged to create a musical “Rap” song focusing on several of those descriptive elements. As technology allows, we will be taping our performance endeavors to be shared (with permission) at the creativity convention in late spring. Later in February we “move on” to Ecuador to explore telephone courtesy, and extending (and accepting/declining) invitations. We will be simulating telephone conversations as we invite our friends to do a variety of activities in a typical South American city, incorporating new verbs with unique grammatical structures and building our vocabulary.