

# Blue Heron Middle School

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## School Motto:

**The 4 A's for Success at Blue Heron: Academics, Attendance, Attitude, and Activities**

Dear Parents and Friends of Blue Heron:

January 30, 2008

I felt it was important for me to communicate with you on several topics below that are impacting your children here at Blue Heron Middle School. I apologize for the length of this letter, but all are important points for parents to consider. Soon, I will also be publishing the 4A Quarterly Report for quarter two, which you will receive with the third quarter progress report at the end of February. Please consider the following topics and see the information below for more details.

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Think you can't afford college for your student? Think Again!  
Two absences for third quarter? Can you make it happen?  
One Book One Community  
Navigation 101  
School Web Site  
How to get good grades?  
Blue Heron receives School of Distinction Honorable Mention  
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- **Think you can't afford college for your student? Think Again.**

If you're in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade and you're ready to work hard in school, keep your grades up and stay out of trouble until you graduate from high school, you may be eligible for a four-year College Bound Scholarship. The College Bound Scholarship is a financial aid program for students who are eligible to participate in the free and reduced lunch program. It is designed to inspire students to begin making their college and career plans without worrying about the cost of attending college. Students are encouraged to apply online at [www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound](http://www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound). Eligible 8th graders must apply by June 1, 2008. This year's 7<sup>th</sup> graders are also advised to sign up this year, but must apply by June 1, 2009.

- **Two absences for third quarter? Can you make it happen?**

Regular daily attendance at Blue Heron is expected. We know that excellent attendance directly relates to success in work and school. Employers regularly tell me that employee attendance is one key for success in their business. It is no different for your child in school. In order for our school to achieve the high standards we expect, students must be in school. Certainly absences are going to happen, however it is my personal goal for students to be in attendance at least 170 of the 180 school days. As of quarter one, 65% of our students were on track to meet that goal. I want to remind parents that they **may only request** an absence to be excused. According to state law, only the school district can determine if an absence is excused. Our school policy states that a valid excuse for missing school is an approved school activity, illness (excessive illness may require a doctor's note), a family emergency, approved pre-arranged absences, suspension, dental and medical appointments. As we continue to "ratchet up" our expectations for attendance, I ask parents to step up their commitment to having their student in school at least 170 of the 180 days, which means only two (2) absences per quarter. Good nourishment and early bed times for your student are the first steps to a healthy lifestyle and positive school attendance.

-----More great information on the back-----

- **One Book One Community**

Blue Heron Middle School invites you to join us in our continuous journey to build community through our shared reading of *The Schwa Was Here* by Neal Shusterman. Tuesday, January 29, 2008, all students at Blue Heron were given their personal copy of the text in their reading classes. Please take the opportunity to read along with your middle school student this book, which was the winner of the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award. I personally have read the book and endorse it for middle school students. There will be lunchtime activities related to the text during the weeks of February 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. I will remind parents that the book is written for middle school age students. Our staff continues to find it a challenge to select an appropriate book for this project, which spans all three grade levels. This project demonstrates one small way that the Blue Heron staff is committed to developing the habit of life-long reading. I think you will enjoy this book!

- **Navigation 101**

Last week at Blue Heron, our staff and students completed the first part of a program called *Navigation 101*. Our vision for the program is to encourage students to plan for the future. *Navigation 101* aims to help students make clear, careful, and creative plans for a life beyond middle school. On June 2-5, 2008, more *Navigation 101* follow-up activities are planned. For more information please visit: [www.k12.wa.us/navigation101](http://www.k12.wa.us/navigation101)

- **School Web Site**

Do you regularly check our school web site? Please bookmark [www.ptsd.wednet.edu/blueheron](http://www.ptsd.wednet.edu/blueheron) and refer to it for the daily bulletin, updates on school closures due to weather, directions to sporting events, and all kinds of useful information. Just a reminder that we will have school on Friday, February 15, 2008, which will be an odd day on the schedule, to make up for the snow day on January 28, 2008.

- **How to get good grades?**

Do you regularly check your student's planner? Developing excellent organizational skills taught in the planner truly is the key to communication and success with your middle school student and will lead to good habits for high school. Teachers ask students daily to write their assignments and projects in the planner. Last fall at our student-led conferences, we presented a student learning plan for every student. It is our hope that parents follow the parent interventions described in the learning plan. If students and parents are interested in receiving specific one-on-one instruction from Principal Decker on how to help your middle school student get good grades, contact me at [mdecker@ptsd50.org](mailto:mdecker@ptsd50.org) or call my office at 379-4540 or my cell phone at 821-1281. I am willing to set up an evening to teach you and your student how to develop excellent organizational and study skills.

- **Blue Heron receives School of Distinction Honorable Mention from State of Washington**

Because of the remarkable gains our Blue Heron students achieved in mathematics and reading scores, our school has earned Honorable Mention in the *2007 State Superintendent's Learning Improvement Award*. Not only did Blue Heron meet high academic standards in mathematics and reading in 2007, but we were also among the schools that have moved at least half their students at least one level in mathematics and reading over the past six years. I want to personally congratulate the students, parents and staff for your dedication and commitment to academic excellence.

Sincerely,

Mark J. Decker