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7th and 8th Grade Social Studies
Russell H. Conwell Middle Magnet School
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Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

The cold winter is behind us and the warm spring weather is quickly feeling like summer, but before we conclude the year at Russell H. Conwell Middle Magnet School, I would like to provide some updates and highlights from my classes and classroom.

This has surely been a unique school year and one that we will never forget. With so much negative news circulating in our society today, it is all too easy to overlook the positive. With that in mind, I am proud to report that this year I was especially amazed by the Conwell students. In particular, I was impressed with the resilience they demonstrated during crisis, their ability to quickly adapt to virtual learning and their determination in striving to meet their academic goals.

During our brick and mortar sessions students did a prompt for me in Social Studies every single day, they listened attentively to new material as it was being presented, they worked hard on class assignments, completed thoughtful projects, submitted homework, studied hard, participated in test review games and performed strongly on tests. Some things that stood out to me for the Seventh Grade were the field trip to the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology, the Ancient Greek Travel Brochures, the Harlem Renaissance Author project and our discussion of current events. For the Eighth Grade, some highlights were the settlement and map making project, the smart exchange interactive lessons on slavery in North America, the Montgomery Bus Boycott assignment and our discussion of the 1774 political cartoon entitled "Bostonians Paying the Excise Man."

This year I taught six different sections of students. No two sections were alike, and I applaud each of them for different reasons.

Section 83 was the loudest class for sure, not just in terms of volume, but also in the way students expressed themselves and the eagerness they had to voice their opinions and challenge ideas.

Section 82 was a good-natured, fun-loving class who learned a lot, was eager to participate and loved to entertain. I learned a lot from them as well, and we had many great laughs together.

Section 81 was a lively and sociable class. There was a lot of competition for attention from me and from their peers. Because this class loved the spotlight, they shined during our in-class performance of *The Salem Witch Trials*.

Section 73 was the most straightforward class. They were always honest with me and were open to discussing their challenges and positive changes that we implemented together. The class meetings we had were really memorable.

Section 72 was an easygoing class. The students formed strong friendships with people who they may never have associated with before. They were always willing to step outside their bubble and welcome new found friends into their network.

Section 71 was a studious class. They worked hard and they were genuinely interested in the subject matter. They found a way to connect to every topic we covered. They loved sharing their stories and personal experiences.

As we look ahead to next year, there are a few things that I am encouraging all of my students to do.

- Visit local museums/historical parks and take pictures
 - We have them in abundance here in our city. (All Conwell students were even given a free family membership to the Penn Museum- take advantage of this offer)
- Read/watch the news and discuss current events with loved ones- even when the conversations may be difficult
- Become politically informed and politically active
- Enjoy our First Amendment rights
 - Find something to believe in and strengthen this belief through practice
 - Put self-expression into writing, create original works of art
 - Read from a wide variety of sources
 - Peaceably assemble
 - Send letters to government officials

I encourage all students to remain in contact with me over the summer via google classroom or by email at pverdi@philasd.org. I check my emails routinely, even over the summer.

I wish you the very best, and I keep all of you in my daily prayers.

Sincerely,

Mr. Paul Verdi