

2/27/09

Dear Parents:

Although adolescents are old enough to make important decisions and manage bigger projects, their limited experience sometimes causes them to take chances that can leave them vulnerable to abuse and injury. Research into the workings of the human brain shows that the prefrontal cortex, the area that lies behind the forehead and directs most of our mental circuitry, is still immature in teenagers. This helps explain why young adolescents often use poor judgment, exhibit extreme emotions, rebel against authority, and take ridiculous risks.

Adolescence continues to be a time when young people first experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. With the dramatic physical changes in their lives adolescents also develop the capacity for sexual activity. At this time, the United States continues to have by far the highest teenage birth rate among the world's developed countries. Peer pressure, the media and easy access to information on the internet are just a few factors that can lead adolescents to make difficult choices at a young age.

Studies of adolescent health from around the country have revealed that adolescents who feel closely connected to their school and their family and who enjoyed academic success are much less likely to get involved with destructive behavior.

Adolescents may be a time of confusion, risk, and vulnerability, but it is also a period of profound growth - physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. For many youths, it is the time when the love of learning becomes ingrained for a lifetime. One big question we need to ask ourselves: Can we (parents and schools) keep pace with their emerging capacity for creative thinking and productive service?

Steve Goar

Principal, McGinnis Middle School

Here are some other bits of important information to know:

CSAP testing which originally had been scheduled for March 3, 4, 5, and 6 has been moved a few days back and will now be held on Friday, March 6, and then Monday - Wednesday, March 9, 10, and 11.

Spring Break this year is March 23 -27.

There is an early release day on Wednesday, March 4.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter ends March 6 with report cards mailed home March, 13.

Odyssey of the Mind has a regional competition on March 14 at Berthoud HS, Loveland & Berthoud, CO.

Science Olympiad has a regional competition March 14 at UCCS, Colorado Springs, CO.

It is time to get all fees that are owed paid. 8<sup>th</sup> graders need to have all accounts cleared before graduation.