



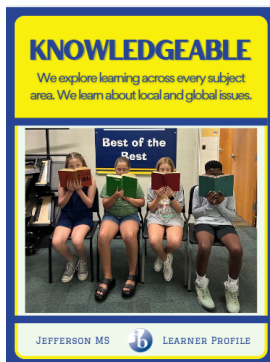
# Thomas Jefferson Middle School

## IB MYP November-December Newsletter

*Learning together to understand and improve ourselves, our futures, and our world.*



### Learner Profile Attributes: Thinking and Risk-Takers



Through November we focused on the learner attributes of being good Communicators and Knowledgeable. This means expressing ourselves confidently and exploring global issues. Our student and staff winners are 8th Grade - Estefany Cabrera, 8th Grade Andrea Castellon, 8th Grade - Zoë Yohannes, Dolphins - Gwen Meyer, Dragons - Elizabeth Daniel, Monarchs - Rahm Surenda, Owls - Simon Rosenblatt-Hoerst, Penguins - Mathias

Fernandez Ugarte, Stingrays - Justin Gonzalez Lopez.

### Community Engagement



Community Engagement is the new service learning for the IB. Students are not just checking boxes for service, but focused on exploring local challenges, building relationships, and reflecting on the work they do. Our TJ students are engaging in this work to use their freedom of petition and

speech to lobby for a new/renovated TJMS. Over 150 letters have been sent by students and staff, and 19 students spoke to our school board. At the next **APS school board meeting on December 18** the board will vote on the Capital Improvement Plan for 2027-2034 and whether TJMS will be included. **Join us at 7pm** at the Syphax Education Center.

### Winter Wonderland Dance



We are having our first dance of the year on **Thursday, December 18** from **2:45-4:00 PM** in the back of the gym. We will have music, games, and food. We will be selling tickets for \$2 during every grade level lunch. This is all grade level dance for the students. We want to have an opportunity for students to celebrate before winter break begins.

### Principal's Update

#### Thank You for Your Generosity

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our families for the incredible generosity shown through recent donations to support Thomas Jefferson Middle School families in need. Your kindness and willingness to give have made a meaningful difference in the lives of others within our school community.

Because of your support, families were able to receive essential items and much-needed assistance during a challenging time. This outpouring of care truly reflects the compassion, empathy, and community spirit that make our school such a special place.

Thank you for partnering with us to support one another and for modeling the values of kindness and generosity for our students. We are deeply grateful for your continued support.

#### Happy Winter Break

We wish all of our Yellow Jacket families a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable winter break. May this time be filled with rest, fun, and special moments together. We look forward to welcoming students back refreshed on January 5th, 2026!

### Community Project



We are off and running with the 8th Grade Community Project. We partnered with 15 organizations on November 25 to bring in guest speakers for the students to hear about work these local non-profits do (pictured to the right are our students with Lucky Dog Rescue's dogs). We also took field trips to 4 separate locations including Area 2 Farms, Central Library, the Lubber Run Community Center, and Phoenix

Bikes. Students got to rank-choice vote for their top 5 most interesting topics or organizations. Then they were put in a group from 15-30 students to learn about the cause they selected. As students were introduced to these topics, they began the investigation phase of their Community Project learning about global data, local and a current event about the topic/community they chose. This part of the Community Project is assessed in math classes using the data unit and applying math in real world contexts.

# WELCOME NEW TJMS PARTNERS!



**FOOD FOR NEIGHBORS**

Our school is partnering with Food For Neighbors to help feed our local students who deal with food insecurity outside of school hours. Even in an area as wealthy as Northern Virginia, one in four kids are struggling with hunger.

[Food For Neighbors](#) is a local organization addressing this problem by collecting food from our community via the Red Bag Program and donating directly to our local schools. The food is then distributed to the students every week through our food pantry.

We hope you will consider participating in the Red Bag food collection program. You can make a difference in a local student's life by simply adding a few extra items to your shopping cart every two months.

Here's how it works:

1. Request a reusable Red Bag [here](#) and Food For Neighbors will drop it off at your house.
2. Fill the Red Bag with food items that are listed on a tag on that bag.
3. Put the Red Bag outside your front door in the morning on the next bag collection day. Collection dates are also listed on the bag tag. And don't worry, FFN will send reminders.

Your Red Bag will be picked up from your house, the food sorted at a local school and delivered directly to our school food pantry. As an added benefit, you can get a tax deduction for the food that you donate!

**With your help, even more kids can be fed.** For more information on the Red Bag program [click here](#). Check out what items FFN collects as they are targeted to ready-made, individually packaged food items that students and teens can eat on-the-go or with little preparation.

As we partner with FFN, other critical volunteer opportunities include: Driving to pick up filled Red Bags and Sorting the donated food during the Red Bag Day events. Visit the [FFN FAQ](#) page to find out more and to sign up to volunteer in these two very important roles. These are great opportunities for our students to receive volunteer service hours, too.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our School Social Worker or Family Liaison or Lisa Dean [Lisa@foodforneighbors.org](mailto:Lisa@foodforneighbors.org).

Thanks for helping us provide food to students who need that extra support!

***Hunger Is Closer Than You Think***  
[www.FoodForNeighbors.org](http://www.FoodForNeighbors.org)

# Project Hygiene Closet

The mission of the Project Hygiene Closet Program is to provide youth with new, unused toiletries and deliver two bullying prevention workshops during the 2025–2026 school year. Our goal is to help students feel confident both inside and out. Poor hygiene can negatively impact self-esteem, and we are committed to uplifting students, combating bullying, and creating a safe space for them to access essential items.

We supply toiletries such as **lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, soap, deodorant, sanitary napkins, and pocket tissues**. By establishing hygiene closets directly within schools, students have discreet and convenient access to these basic necessities—items that many may otherwise go without.

Each participating school will also receive a Project Hygiene Bullying Prevention Workshop, either during National Bullying Prevention Month in October or through a Spring session, tailored to reinforce our message of self-care and respect.

[TO DONATE TOILETRIES CLICK HERE](#)