

RPRYconnect

YOUR LINK TO THE STUDENTS & FACULTY OF RPRY

Volume 1, Issue 4

Featured Instructor: Mrs. Helen Eisler

Subject: Social Studies, Math

Classes: Grades 7 & 8

Years at RPRY: 20

For Mrs. Helene Eisler, stagnation is the enemy: “I like to take on a challenge and be flexible.” In her two decades at RPRY, she has had the opportunity to teach Primer, and Grades 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8, each demanding its particular set of skills and strategies. Mrs. Eisler is now firmly positioned in the upper grades, as a Social Studies instructor in Grades 7 and 8, math instructor in Grade 7, Language Arts Chairperson for Grades 5-8, and as RPRY’s Eighth Grade Advisor. She also manages to find the time to tutor students on the side.

In seventh grade, students begin studying American History, from the period of exploration and

colonization and the War of Independence, through the early years of the United States, ending with the Civil War. Eighth graders pick up from the Civil War and enter the 20th century, with a heavy emphasis on the Constitution, the political and electoral process. They chart the development of the two major political parties and debate the pros and cons of having more or less government. These issues were especially relevant during this election year.

Mrs. Eisler employs varied learning techniques in her classroom: Seventh graders researched Native American life and had the choice of producing essays,



posters, or dioramas to demonstrate their knowledge. The explorers were brought to life as members of the class were asked to become explorers and their classmates were asked to interview them about their experiences. Mrs. Eisler also uses the “jigsaw” method, in which the class is divided into four subsets which research different topics. Then, the groups are reconstituted to include one member of each subset, and the students share their findings with each other.

Mrs. Eisler sees her role as preparing RPRY’s students for the rigors of high school. She spends many periods teaching her students how to outline from a textbook, a skill that is critical in high school and beyond. A major component of her class is the research report, and her students are trained how to research, take notes, write, and prepare a report that adheres to

rigid standards of format and content.

Advising the eighth grade is a full-time job in and of itself. For RPRY students, the eighth grade is an incredible year of growth and leadership experiences, and Mrs. Eisler directs it all from behind the scenes, from fundraising initiatives



(bagels on Fridays, daily canteen, chocolate bar and gift wrap sales) through all the eighth grade’s activities, notably the school-wide Purim Carnival, Graduation Trip to

Washington in June, Yearbook bookkeeping, Chesed Hours tallying, and Bikur Cholim committee. The eighth graders who spend time with her during the graduation year of frenzied activity benefit from a teacher who appreciates the gradual development of a student’s character over many years, and can offer wisdom and advice as they reach young adulthood.

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