

# HHBMS



# Patriots

Patriot logo by Bob Schultz. [Dribbble.com](http://Dribbble.com).

## August 2021-22 School Year Parent Newsletter

7th Grade Social Studies | Harlon Henry Block Middle School

### *Announcements*

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Welcome to the 2021-22 school year and the inaugural issue of Harlon Henry Block Middle School's 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Parent Newsletter! Inside you'll find all sorts of news and information to get you up to speed on what's happening with your child's studies in the social sciences at HHBMS.

We look forward to a promising future together and wish the very best for you and our students over what will undoubtedly be an amazing school year. Go Patriots!

*-The HHBMS Social Studies Department*

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## Teacher's Corner

Dear Patriot Parents,

Welcome back from what I hope was a wonderful summer break! With the first week of school off to a great start, I first want to share with you how grateful I am for the opportunity to teach your children about the social sciences here at HHBMS. Rest assured, I take this commitment very seriously and am completely invested in seeing all my students succeed both in and out of the classroom.

In the coming months, I plan to use this space to share important scholastic information about your children who, with our combined support, will achieve great success over the coming school year!

With gratitude,

Robert Ranstadler



## Personal and Professional Highlights

**Robert C. Ranstadler**

Age: 44

Hometown: Detroit, Michigan

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran (1995 – 2015)

B.S., History, Excelsior College (2015)

M.A., Military History, Norwich University (2017)

M.Ed., Curr. & Inst., Houston Baptist University (2020)

Husband to wife, Emily, and father to Robert (10) and Richard (4)

Hobbies include coaching baseball, hiking, and writing

## Patriot Classroom Calendar

# August 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Texas Geography Pre-Test	21
22	23 Geography of Texas	24	25	26	27 Geography Quiz	28
29	30 Regions of Texas	31	Regions Quiz	Geography/Regions Review	Geography/Regions Exam	

## EVENTS

### AUG. 18

First day of classes/beginning of first nine weeks

### AUG. 27

Early dismissal for teacher work day

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## Learning Strategy Spotlight: Spaced Practice

*NOTE TO PARENTS: The following article represents the first in a series of installments where I plan to share with you some of the instructional tools and techniques that I will be using this year while teaching your children. Some ideas will likely be familiar, but others might appear new; this is intentional and by design. My teaching philosophy, as you and your children will discover over the coming months, is basically to use what works. Whether it's a time-tested approach or a more modern technique, I'm open to using any method that promotes and accelerates student success.*

Spaced learning, or spaced instruction, is a mode of study that emphasizes learning and the retention of facts through the repeated exposure of material over predetermined intervals (Lambert, 2019). Put another way, it's the direct opposite of trying to learn everything at once, such as "cramming" for an exam the night before a big test.

“When you present  
and repeat  
information over  
intervals of time, you  
can increase the  
uptake of  
knowledge...”

*-Dr. B. Price Kerfoot, MD, Ed.M  
Harvard University Associate Professor of Surgery (2009)*

Over the past few decades, many studies have shown that spaced learning is superior to “cramming” or massed learning. A 2013 experiment conducted across several California universities, for example, found that “spaced presentation... promoted better overall performance than did strategic massed training” (McDaniel, Fadler, & Pashler, 2013, p. 1431).

A second MIT study found that “Participants recognized more items learned under the spaced learning condition than under the massed learning condition” (Xue, Mei, Chen, Lu, Poldrack, & Dong, 2011, p. 1624). In other words, both teams of researchers discovered that even the most thoughtfully planned mass lessons were inferior to spaced practice.

With all the above in mind, the first step I took in planning out this year's instruction was developing an approach centered around the concept of spaced

practice. So, during the first few weeks of class, don't be alarmed if your children come home with stories of tests being conducted prior to anything being taught out of the textbook—this is completely normal and part of the plan. Also, no students will be graded on pre-tests. Brief quizzes are instead the first step in spaced practice strategy.

For this plan to really be effective, I'll need your help. Please take some time every evening to sit down with your son or daughter and review their homework, which will revisit key content points that they learned throughout the school day.

Finally, please do feel free to [contact me](#) with any questions or concerns. I truly appreciate your assistance in helping our students succeed!





Battleship TEXAS (BB-35), La Porte, TX. Personal photo.

## Field Trip Update

Mark this one down on your calendar parents because it's a field trip you simply won't want your son or daughter to miss! On Tuesday, Sept. 14, our 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies class will be visiting [Battleship TEXAS](#), a true piece of U.S. and Texas state history. Located just 30 minutes east of downtown Houston, this 20<sup>th</sup> century warship visited nearly every corner of the globe while fighting in both WWI and WWII. Since being decommissioned, she has served as a full-time battleship museum and a national landmark. Fees, transportation details, chaperone opportunities, and a complete trip schedule will be distributed to students later this month.

## Study Tips\*



Don't "cram" all studies into a single night.



Consistently study at the same time of day/night.



Avoid distractions while studying.



Try to tackle the most challenging subject first.

\*Above tips courtesy [Educationcorner.com](#).

## HHBMS Historical Society News

In addition to a few other firsts, the 2021-22 school year will also bring with it an exciting new extracurricular organization in the form of the [Harlon Henry Block Middle School Historical Society!](#)

Thanks to several generous donations from our PTO, two community partners, and a private grant, HHBMS will be able to recognize and celebrate superior academic achievement within the social sciences. Beginning on Monday, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, enrollment will be open to all middle school students who meet the [minimum memberships requirements](#).

Student-members will be afforded opportunities beyond those of their peers, such as the earning of advanced credits, the shadowing of professional adults working in related fields, and the chance to engage in stimulating and rewarding field projects.

Check back here for more details next month!

## Featured References

Lambert, C. (2019). Learning by degrees. *Harvard Magazine*, (Nov-Dec 2009). Retrieved from <https://harvardmagazine.com/2009/11/spaced-education-boosts-learning>

McDaniel, M. A., Fadler, C. L., & Pashler, H. (2013). Effects of spaced versus massed training in function learning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 39(5), 1417–1432. Retrieved from <https://libproxy.hbu.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1056010&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

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