

# Banaadir Academy School Newsletter

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Principal: James Strait  
Assistant Director: Abdighani Ali  
Secretary: Sahro Jama

## Principal's News

Dear Banaadir Families,

Welcome to the 2008 -2009 school year!! I am hopeful that you had an enjoyable and relaxing summer with family and friends. We are all very excited that a new school year is upon us, and we are looking forward to the challenge of making it a wonderful experience for your children. As always, students are the focus of the Banaadir staff. We will continue to seek ways to improve our school and set high standards for our students. Our world is changing and we need to prepare them for the future. We can't do it by ourselves. We need your support, and we want to encourage you to take the time to become involved in the education of your children and make the 2008-2009 school year a great learning experience. Together we can make incredible things happen.

Your efforts at home are essential and indispensable in making sure every child does their personal best and reaches their full potential. I feel extremely fortunate to be able to work at Banaadir Academy and look forward to again working with our students, parents and staff members. We truly have a special school environment as the result of our students, staff and parents working together. Have a great 2008-2009 school year!

James Strait

## Dear Parents

Several existing staff members have shifted job titles for the upcoming school year. Molly McGuire moved to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Michael Edwards moved to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Rebecca Zeck moved to Kindergarten.

Ruth Kerl- Title I Teacher  
Molly Sanders- ELL Teacher  
Katie Greski- Kindergarten  
Joe Hutchins- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Scott Knudsen-Middle School  
Tara Ross-Middle School  
Omar Osman -Arabic Instructor

New to our staff are the following:



**"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." NELSON MANDELA**

## Celebration!

Banaadir Academy will not be in school Tuesday the 30<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> due to parent/teacher conferences and the recognition of Eid ul-Fitr. We keep in mind our families that are celebrating this Muslim holiday. Eid ul-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

The holiday lasts for two days in which families share time with each other. Common practices that are done over these two days are giving and receiving gifts from others. Enjoy this time together and we look forward to getting back to work on Thursday!

## Office Staff

**James Strait- Principal,**  
[jstrait@mtcs.org](mailto:jstrait@mtcs.org)

I would like to take this opportunity to share a little information about myself. I am proud graduate of Sam Houston High in San Antonio, Texas. I was four year starter on the football and track team. I earned All-Conference, All-State and AAU All-American honors in track and field. I received a four-year track and field scholarship to Kansas State. Transferred to Bethel College in which I received a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Health. I was All-Conference and National finalist for Royals track and field team. After graduating from Bethel College I joined the Active Army for three years. After three years of active military, I joined the Minnesota National Guard. This will be my 18<sup>th</sup> year of military service as a Warrant Officer and an Iraq Veteran. I also hold a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Capella University. Currently, I am pursuing a Doctrine

in Education Administration from Capella University.

I began my career in education at Minnesota Transitional Charter as a teacher in 2000. I previously taught Physical Education, Health and College Prep at the Technology High School. In 2003 I was named the Principal for the new Leadership Academy, which is the first JROTC program in Minneapolis. In 2007 our district started a new program (Banaadir Academy) for ELL students in which I was given the opportunity to take on the leadership. Currently, I am the Principal for both the Leadership and Banaadir Academy. I have three boys Jordan, Javen and Josiah. My wife Michelle is the Principal of Kaleidoscope Charter in Otsego, MN.

**Abdighani M. Ali- Assistant Director, [Abdighani@mtcs.org](mailto:Abdighani@mtcs.org)**

Mr. Ali is the assistant director at Banaadir Academy. Additionally, he is the executive director of the Somali Communities of America, the founder of Islamic Foundation of America, the vice president of Ihsan Relief Organization and the director of Al-furqan Institute of Arabic and Islamic Education. He is also a registered imam in Hennepin County.

Mr. Ali's educational back ground includes an AA in Computer Programming from MCTC, a bachelor's degree in Business Management from St. Mary's University Minneapolis. He is also a Master candidate in Islamic Law at the Islamic University of Minnesota, Robbinsdale

**Sahro Jama- Secretary, [sjama@mtcs.org](mailto:sjama@mtcs.org)**

Ms. Jama is the school secretary for Banaadir Academy. Her education includes the Office Management Program at Rasmussen College in Eagan, MN.

## Teacher Aids

**Fadumo Farah- [ffarah@mtcs.org](mailto:ffarah@mtcs.org)**

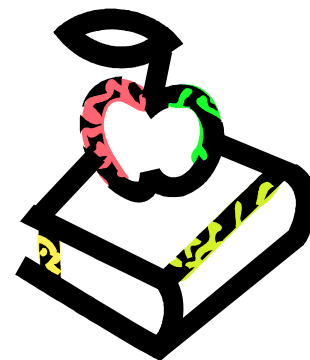
Ms. Farah is a teacher's aide. This is her second year here at Banaadir Academy.

**Ali Yusuf- [iyusuf@mtcs.org](mailto:iyusuf@mtcs.org)**

Hello, I am Ali Yusuf and I work at MTS Banaadir as a TA and bus driver. I graduated from Wakefield High school in Virginia and NT Northern Community College.

**Richard Burton- [rburton@mtcs.org](mailto:rburton@mtcs.org)**

My name is Richard Burton (or Hamza). I've been working for Banaadir for 2 years. This has been the first job that I like to work at. I have 2 years of college. I'm happily married; we have 3 children that we are very proud of.



## Specialists

### **Richard Bishop- rbishop@mtcs.org**

I am a special education case manager/instructor in the district. This is my second year and I am assigned to two sites; Banaadir and MIA. I also work with independent study students at the Tech site. I have been in education 30 years working as a para, special education classroom teacher (elementary, Middle/Junior H.S., High School and alternative programs), highly qualified special education teacher, Lead teacher, Behavior Specialist, Coordinator, consultant for the Charter School Special Education Project, Assistant Director and Director. I have worked at 4 charter schools, consulted at 10 charter schools and founded one charter school. I have worked in treatment schools, Recovery/Sober schools, ALC's, ALP's, hospital programs and day-treatment programs. I also have taught at Highview Middle School, Centennial H.S., and Woodbury H.S. I have a B.A. from St. John's University, M.Ed. from University of St. Thomas, a J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law and a Director of Special Education License from the University of Minnesota/Mn Dept. of Education. I am married and my wife owns Emily's Bakery and Deli in Hastings. I have a 23 year old daughter who is a contemplative educator/musician in France, a 26 year-old son who is an Engineer in Utah, 22 year old stepson in the Air Force in Alaska and a stepson who is a Sr. at Woodbury H.S. I enjoy music, travel, dancing, all athletics (especially golf, running, sailing and soccer), writing and reading.

### **Lynne Sherry-lsherry@mtcs.org**

My name is Lynne Sherry and I am the ESL Coordinator here at Banaadir Academy. I am so excited about this year and the enormous possibilities it holds. I grew up in the Twin Cities area and received my degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead. I graduated with an emphasis and license to teach kindergarten through sixth grade. After graduating I began my career teaching middle school literature at a private school in Anoka, MN. From that enriching experience I moved on to teaching first grade and working with kindergarten students in a latchkey program. I continued my education with Hamline University receiving my Masters of Arts in Education and a certificate in ESL for mainstream teachers. I am currently finishing up classes through Hamline University to earn a license in ESL. I have a love for learning and my long term goals are to continue with my education ultimately becoming licensed in reading and special education.

### **Ruth Kerl-rkerl@mtcs.org**

Hello Banaadir parents. I am the Title 1 teacher here at school and it is my job to help your children with their reading skills. If your children's test scores show that they are in need of some extra reading help I will be working with them throughout the year in small groups. I am very excited to work with them and plan on having a great year with the students.

I am a trained ESL teacher with an elementary background and have worked with many students around the state, as well as in Seoul, Korea.

I hope to meet you all soon.

**Molly Sanders-msanders@mtcs.org**

Hello, my name is Molly Sanders. I am an ESL teacher at Banaadir Academy I will be working with students in grades 1 through 5. I grew up near Minneapolis and attended the University of Minnesota, where I received a B.A. in Japanese and later my ESL license. Prior to teaching at Banaadir Academy, I taught ESL in Osaka, Japan and in the Anoka-Hennepin District. I am very excited to be here and look forward to working with the awesome kids at Banaadir!

**Bill Potts-bpotts@mtcs.org**

My degree is from St. Cloud State University where I received a B.S in Education with minors in Coaching, and Adaptive Physical Education. I have most recently been teaching with the Banaadir students the last two years! Wow, what a wild time it has been! The students have come so far and they have improved by leaps and bounds! Prior to that, I had taught in South Minneapolis for five years, and three years prior to that in the North metro. All my years of teaching have been in the area of Physical Education and Health. I also have several years experience coaching youth sports.

**Middle School Teachers****Danielle Magnuson-dmagnuson@mtcs.org**

My name is Danielle Magnuson, and I would like to welcome your child to Middle School English. I graduated with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in Middle School Communication Arts and Literature. I am working on my Masters in Literacy Education, so I can continue to grow and apply my knowledge in the area of reading. The last couple of years I taught all subject areas to fourth and fifth grade students at a private school in Andover, MN. Last year I taught sixth through eighth English at Banaadir Academy, and I will do the same this year.

**Tara Ross-tross@mtcs.org**

Hello!! I grew up in Eau Claire, WI and St. Paul, MN. I have been living in San Diego, CA for the past 10 years and just recently moved to St. Paul, MN. I have a lot of family in this area and it is nice to be back! One of my main passions is traveling (which is why I have moved a lot). Now that I am back in MN I am excited to be able to visit the North Shore more often. When in CA I got my college education in Math along with my teaching license. I have worked in middle schools and high schools. Through that I have found that I really enjoy being located at a middle school! I am looking forward to getting to know all the students here at Banaadir Academy.

**Scott Knudsen-sknudsen@mtcs.org**

My name is Mr. Knudsen and I am the new Social Studies teacher for Banaadir Academy and the JROTC program. I have 7 prior years of teaching experience. I taught in Chicago, Illinois and most recently in Anchorage, Alaska. I was born and raised in Minnesota so I am excited to be back in the state. I am looking forward to a great year with the students.

## Elementary Teachers

### **Kati Greski- Kindergarten, kgreski@mtcs.org**

My name is Mrs. Greski and I teach one of the kindergarten classes at Banaadir. This is my first year teaching and I am very excited to work with a great bunch of students. I graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN with my degree in elementary teaching. I recently got married and reside in Woodbury with my husband and my new puppy, Cooper!

### **Becky Zeck-Kindergarten, rzeck@mtcs.org**

Welcome to Kindergarten! My name is Ms. Zeck and I am one of two kindergarten teachers at Banaadir. I am a graduate of the University of MN and really enjoy being a teacher. I have been working hard to learn lots about the Somali culture. This is my second year at Banaadir academy. Last year I taught third and fourth grade so kindergarten is quite a switch. Your children are doing great! We are making friends and building community during morning meeting each day. We already know lots of our letter sounds and we have been practicing writing our names. We love reading and math centers, especially the listening center for books on tape. The play kitchen is one of our favorite parts of choice time. Please visit us any time and we can show you around our room!

### **Molly McGuire-1<sup>st</sup> Grade, mmcguire@mtcs.org**

My name is Molly McGuire, and I teach first grade at Banaadir Academy. This is my second year with Banaadir Academy. I have been teaching for the past eight years at Minnesota Transitions Elementary. I am excited for my class, and we are working hard. This year homework will be sent home each night. I am working hard on organization. Learning to organize oneself is a skill we work on in class and you will be helping your son or daughter by reinforcing that skill at home. PLEASE check their backpack each night. They will be proud of their work and benefit from your praise. All First graders will be working on writing short stories, addition and subtraction problems, and reading at their appropriate level. As a classroom, we will continue to work on problem solving. It is important to learn how to fix our problems by ourselves. First Grade is one of the most important years of your child's school experience. They will be learning to read!

### **Rani Hayden-1<sup>st</sup> Grade, rhayden@mtcs.org**

Hello from Mrs. Hayden's 1<sup>st</sup> Grade! I am one of the two first grade teachers at Banaadir. This is my 13<sup>th</sup> year in teaching, but only my second year here and I am very excited to be teaching 1<sup>st</sup> grade again! I have taught from prekindergarten all the way up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I enjoy teaching all of the subjects, but my favorites are math and science.

We are planning some exciting things in 1<sup>st</sup> grade! Reading will include focusing on phonemic awareness and phonics throughout the year. Math will use many manipulatives to teach time, money, graphing and many forms of problem solving. Science this semester will be balance and motion and pebbles, sand, and silt. Social Studies next

semester will focus on maps and directions. We are also planning some fun and educational field trips during the year. Stay tuned for more details.

I look forward to meeting all of you at conferences in October!

**Rebecca Patterson-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, rpatterson@mtcs.org**

Greetings family and friends,

I am excited to begin my second year teaching at Banaadir Academy. It is nice to see familiar faces this year. Many of my current students are the little brother or sister of students I had last year. It is amazing to watch how much they grow and change in a year.

Before moving to Minneapolis I lived in Wisconsin, New Mexico, and Iowa. I have enjoyed teaching wherever I go. I especially like working with students of different cultural backgrounds than my own because I love to travel and learn about the world's people, languages and customs. My other hobbies include yoga and studying Spanish.

I look forward to meeting you and helping your child climb to higher academic levels.

**Michael Edwards-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, medwards@mtcs.org**

My name is Michael Edwards, and I am in my 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. I have mostly taught in the Minneapolis District, with a year in the Anoka-Hennepin District. I have grown up in the Twin Cities, and have lived here all of my life. I am married, and have one daughter, who is in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade this year. I am excited to be back at Banaadir for a second year, and looking forward to working with your children.

**Joe Hutchins- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, jhutchins@mtcs.org**

Hi my name is Joe Hutchins and I am the new fourth grade teacher here at Banaadir. I graduated from the University of St. Thomas with a double major in Elementary Education and Psychology. Following my experience at St. Thomas I student taught and spent time in the St. Paul Public Schools. I'm getting more excited for the school year every week I'm in the classroom. The students have shown great potential in the first few weeks of school! I hope to stay in constant communication with you throughout the school year.

**Kim Swanson-5<sup>th</sup> Grade, kswanson@mtcs.org**

In fifth grade we are very busy getting our year started. I have been teaching for eight years and this is my second year at Banaadir. The students are very eager to learn all they need to pass fifth grade. We will be working on mastering reading and vocabulary this year. Starting very soon they will be learning a new word each week and they need to keep reading at home for 30-50 minutes a day. I look forward to a great year with your son or daughter.

## Homework Tips

1. Stay in contact teachers. If you have any questions about your child's homework quantity or quality call, email, or set up a conference with their teacher.
2. Set up a consistent place to study. Have students work in the same place every evening.
3. Choose a study place that is free from distractions. Students shouldn't have access to cell phones, email, videogames or TV during this time
4. Be available. Make sure your child knows where you are in case they have a question or are confused.
5. Discuss homework together. When they have completed their assignments, ask them questions about what they learned, found easy or difficult.

## Important Dates

### October

October 1<sup>st</sup>- Parent Teacher Conferences (No school for students)

October 17<sup>th</sup>-Charter School Conference (No school for students)

### November

November 2<sup>nd</sup>- Daylight Savings Time, fall back 1 hour

November 3<sup>rd</sup>- Staff Development Day (No school for students)

November 4<sup>th</sup>- First day of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

November 26<sup>th</sup>- Staff Development Day (No school for students)

November 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>- Thanksgiving

### December

December 8<sup>th</sup>- EID Duha (No school for staff and students)

December 22<sup>nd</sup>- Winter Break starts

