

# Sorting out the science of 8th grade

## Reporter searches for the answers

My Day as an Eighth-Grader:

9:15: I rush into the office at Highland Oaks Middle School, 2375 NE 203rd St. School began 15 minutes ago while I was stuck in traffic, panicking. Tardy students must have notes from their parents. Assistant principal **Guy Newland** tells me, "You're in trouble."



**GRACE LIM**

9:17: In home room with student **Mandisa Skyers**, a 13-year-old in the gifted program. That means she has an IQ of at least 130.

9:27: In physical science class with **Dr. Gottfried**, who is handing out the first test of the year. He smiles and says, "Good luck." Question No. 36: "If it takes the old, infirm teacher, **Dr. Gottfried**, 200 seconds to get from the math room to the science room, a distance of 50 meters, how slow is he walking?" I look up for divine guidance and find THE LAB SAFETY RULES, Rule No. 8: "Never taste anything in the lab."

9:59: **Delvin Brown** is the first to turn in the test. "It's hard if you didn't study," he says. "I studied."

10:23: **Sonia Szymankiewicz** grabs Mandisa in the hallway and asks frantically, "Was the test hard?"



**JON KRAL / Miami Herald Staff**

**AT LUNCH:** Herald staff writer Grace Lim, right, chats with eighth-grader Mandisa Skyers in the cafeteria at Highland Oaks Middle.

Without waiting for an answer, she moans, "I'm gonna fail."

10:25: In Algebra I. There is a quiz tomorrow so we study in small groups. **Dino Pancaro**, **Wanlada Ruscmetes** and Mandisa work on a problem that reads, "Tina is  $t$  years old, and her age five years ago was one-fourth her age 16 years from now." We're supposed to write a mathematical equation to represent that sentence.

11:18: Sonia grabs Mandisa in the hallway and proclaims, "I failed the test!"

11:20: In English class going over the family tree of the Greek gods. Teacher **Mrs. Morris** tells us, "Zeus had 12 wives." All the girls groan. Then Mrs. Morris tells us that two of the 12 were his sis-

ters. Everyone groans. "That's so nasty," one student says. We learn that Zeus had at least 21 kids. "He was a very busy god," Mrs. Morris says. We also learn there is a god named Triton. Mrs. Morris asks, "Who saw *The Little Mermaid*?" Sonia waves her arm high in the air and blurts, "Triton is the father of Ariel. I know the whole thing by memory!"

12:15: I'm the only one at my table to buy a cafeteria lunch. The others knew something I didn't. Mandisa, **Jenna Goldstein**, **Desiree Lomer** and Sonia always sit together. I wait in line for my grilled-cheese sandwich, soggy fries, sliced peaches and milk. A short seventh-grader bumps into me, looks up and asks, "What

grade are you in?"

1 p.m.: We are late for P.E. and are locked out of the locker room. We pound on the door. **Coach Green** asks, "Why are you late?" Sonia points to me and says, "We're with The Miami Herald." Coach Green lets us in, but not before she glares at me and says, "That's no excuse."

We stand in line to play four-square. I never got to play because some kid in a denim shirt and matching denim shorts cut in line five times before I got up. Two kids hog the ball and cheat, bullying the others to give in.

We mess up on our exercises and Coach Green punishes us by making us run a lap. Mandisa says, "My side is killing me." We

run the quarter mile in three minutes flat.

1:50: In American History playing Jeopardy. Subject -- The Revolutionary War. The answer: The person who defended the British soldiers who shot the kids in the Boston Massacre. Student **Eli Gorin** raises his hand with great confidence. "I know it. I know it. Who is Sam Adams?" **Mrs. Paloger** shakes her head and pounces, "No! Wrong!" The other team gets the right answer. "Who is John Adams?"

*The answer to the science problem is 25 centimeters per second and the answer to the algebra problem is  $t-5 = 1/4(t+16)$ .*

*Next week: My Day as an 11th-Grader.*