



Washington Township Schools "Making a Difference"

H1N1 Update from Our Health Office

As noted in a parent letter sent home this week, we do have suspected cases of the H1N1 flu. Those children are currently home resting. We continue to ask parents to keep their children home if they have any of the following symptoms: fever 100 degrees or greater, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. If you are not able to measure a temperature, check to see if your child is warm, have a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering if they have a fever.

Please do not send your child to school to be diagnosed by the Nurse, contact your physician. All children **must** be fever free for 24 hours without the use of analgesics (such as Tylenol or Motrin type medications) before they can return to school. Antibiotics prescribed by your physician (for illnesses such as strep throat, pink eye) must be administered for at least 24 hours before your child can return to school. If they still have symptoms, do not send them to school.

As a reminder - in order to keep our students healthy and safe we request that all injuries which occur outside of school need to be treated at home. Send in a note to the nurse if you feel she needs to monitor it. Communication is key. Help us keep all the children healthy in our schools by keeping sick children home and reinforcing frequent hand washing and covering coughs/sneezes.

The Centers of Disease Control has posted "Seasonal and H1N1 2009 Flu: A Guide for Parents", on their website at <http://cdc.gov.flu/freeresources>.



Child Care on Parent-Teacher Conference Days

During Parent-Teacher Conference days (November 17th, 18th, & 19th) our after-school child care program will open early, at 1p.m. and close at 6 p.m. for the convenience of our working parents. If your child attends our after-school child care program on a full or part-time basis (5-10 hours per week), there is no charge for the additional time. If your child(ren) is not a full or part-time participant, the cost for this care will be \$6.10 per hour for the first child, \$4.35 per hour for the second and \$3.15 per hour for the third. If you anticipate needing this service please contact your child's school as soon as possible to reserve a place for your child(ren). You will need to have a child care application (for each child) on file in order to use this service. Kindly contact Margaret Lyons at 908-689-0681 if you have any questions.

Port Colden School
Brass Castle School

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Old Schoolhouse Brick Pavers

We have had a lot of interest in purchasing additional engraved paver bricks to be placed in the sidewalk in front of the Old Schoolhouse. If you would be interested in purchasing an engraved brick there is an order form with purchasing information on our website, www.washingtontownshipschools.org. The deadline for purchasing is Nov. 30, 2009. If you would like to purchase a brick and do not have access to the Internet please contact Denise Jordan at Port Colden School.

Port Colden Students Teamed Up Against Bullies

On Friday, October 23, the students at Port Colden wore their favorite team shirts to show our unity against bullies. Throughout the month, students have been learning about ways to prevent bullying. They read books, did skits, and used puppets to show how to stop bullying and make good choices when dealing with bullies. Students learned about the different types of bullying: physical, emotional, and social, and how to recognize and deal with each.

As a culminating activity, we had a special assembly at which the students could show what they'd learned. Mrs. Maurer, Mrs. Bradley, and Mrs. Bell role played different types of bullying and asked the students what to do in each situation. After Mrs. Bradley's presentation, students really enjoyed performing the "Bully Rap" that they had been practicing in their classrooms. Fun was had by all and a great lesson was learned!

National Day on Writing!

October 20th was the **National Day on Writing!** For more information, see <http://www.heinemann.com/shared/emails/NatIDayWriting10-20-09.html>

Parents are Invited

Our district's Parent Visitation Day is on Thursday, November 12, 2009. Over the next few weeks look in your child's backpack for your invitation! You will be able to select a morning or afternoon time to visit your child's classroom. Please sign in at the office before proceeding to the classroom at the appointed time. Chairs will be set up in the back of the classroom for you to sit and observe your child's classroom in action. Since you will be visiting during instructional time, please make child care arrangements for younger siblings. Thank you!

Substitute School Nurses

Anyone who is a Registered Nurse licensed in the state of NJ can get information at the Board Office in the Old Schoolhouse to be a School Nurse sub for the district. We have a new competitive School Nurse sub rate this school year.

New This Year—Grandparents Day!

We are hosting our first kindergarten and grade 1 Grandparents Days. Kdg.: Nov. 4th & Gr. 1: Nov. 17th. Those parents need to watch for details.



Family Assistance Committee

We would like to take a moment to re-introduce you to our district's Family Assistance Committee. The FAC is a group of concerned individuals comprised of members of our staff. These individuals have a common interest and that is to assist the needy families of our school community.

With the continued instability of our economy, it is more important than ever to provide support for our families in need of assistance. The Family Assistance Committee (FAC) tries to do just that. There are times when members of our school community may have a short-term financial crisis, have faced the loss of a loved one or they simply can't afford a new coat or backpack for their child. The Family Assistance Committee has and will continue to help these families. For example, the FAC helped to pay a utility bill, helped to repair a car so a parent could get to work, and provided a winter coat to a child in need, just to name a few services.

We also continue to partner with local clubs and businesses in order to call upon their resources when and if needed. If you know of a local business or organization that may be of some help, please call either the Port Colden or Brass Castle School office. We would like to add their name to our Partner's List.

If you are in need of our services please do not hesitate to reach out to us by calling us 689-0681 ext. 539. All contacts are highly confidential.

Veteran's Day Celebrated at Our Schools ~ November 11th

People say the most patriotic thing a person can do is to stand up to defend their country during times of peace and times of conflict. We have a host of activities planned at both schools for Veteran's Day in our efforts to honor those men and women who are and were courageous enough to do just that. Port Colden's ceremonies will begin with Reveille and each grade level will then sing a patriotic song. Boy/Girl Scouts at Brass Castle will lead a flag raising ceremony, our trumpet students will play the Star Spangled Banner and the children will then sing "America". Students will read their essays honoring Veterans. We have special guests that join us that day - Veterans and men and women who are currently serving in our military - PC Veterans should arrive at 1:30pm and BC Veterans at 9:15am. If you have a member of your family who is a Veteran, or is currently serving in the military, please call us so we can extend an invitation to them as well. We also have plans to create a "Wall of Honor". Students will draw or send in pictures of family members who are currently serving or who have served our country. Those pictures and drawings will be hung, in timeline fashion, in the front hall of our schools for everyone to see. Students will write cards to be sent to VA hospitals. We have an exciting day planned to honor service people.

Riding the Bus & Following the Rules

Please talk with your children about the importance of good behavior on the school bus. Remind your children that our drivers need to focus on driving carefully and should not be distracted by students who are not following the rules. Students should sit quietly in their seats and talk to their neighbors in a soft voice.

In addition, cell phones should remain in backpacks while in school and on the bus. The school's cell phone policy applies to the bus as well as the school.

Mark Your Calendars!

- Brass Castle's Kindergarten Grandparent's Day - November 4
- NJEA Teacher Convention - NO SCHOOL - November 5 & 6
- Report Cards Issued - November 13
- Port Colden's Grade 1 Grandparent's Day - November 17
- Parent/Teacher Conferences - EARLY DISMISSAL—Nov. 17, 18, 19
- Thanksgiving Recess Begins - EARLY DISMISSAL - November 25
- Thanksgiving Recess - NO SCHOOL - November 26 and 27

ExxonMobil Grants

Recently the district was awarded a \$1,000 grant through ExxonMobil's Volunteer Involvement Program. The funds from this grant will be used to fund a grant program within our schools. Teachers may apply for funds to pursue special projects that will enhance instruction. Last year, teachers purchased podcasting equipment, grade level books, and SMARTboard recording systems. Stay tuned for this year's recipients.

Teachers' Turn to Learn

Although the hallways were a little quieter on Monday, October 12th, when schools closed for students, our teachers were very busy that day! October 12th was Warren County Countywide In-service Day. All teachers throughout the county participated in a variety of professional development programs, lesson planning, and curriculum development experiences that provided them with a variety of new classroom teaching strategies and techniques.

Teachers attended in-service programs throughout the county as well as worked at our own schools. Washington Township hosted a Learnia workshop and our grade 3-6 teachers were trained with Franklin Township teachers. Learnia, a statewide initiative, is a formative assessment tool that allows educators to: evaluate and measure student achievement in a low-pressure context; connect specific grade level indicators with specific students or groups of students; and improve instruction. Grade 1 and 2 teachers learned how to use Dibels, a new formative assessment in reading that will help target skills for instruction. In addition, teachers attended SMARTboard, early learner skills, and conflict resolution workshops along with a variety of articulation experiences.

Future Thespians!

After reading the book, "The Little Red Hen," Mrs. Maurer's class decided to act out the story. With masks on and parts memorized, Mrs. Maurer's class performed the play for their homeroom teachers, Mrs. Mason, and Mr. Jinks. Everyone in the class did a wonderful job and enjoyed performing in front of their audience. The students had so much fun that they are now asking to act out another book. Stay tuned!



Important Immunization Update to 5th Grade Parents

All children born on or after January 1, 1997 and entering 6th grade in September 2010 must show proof of having received:

- A) one dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis vaccine) and
- B) one dose of a meningococcal-containing vaccine.

Please note that students who do not have proof of these immunizations will not be allowed to enter 6th grade, as per state code (N.J.A.C. 8:57-4), until documentation is presented to the school. Please make sure your child receives the proper immunizations at their 11-year old doctor visit. To ensure a smooth transition into 6th grade, please send in proof of immunizations this year as your child turns 11 years old.

School Safety Awareness Week

The week of October 19th was School Safety Awareness Week. Mrs. Bradley visited all classrooms to talk about school safety and bullying. Mrs. Bradley did lessons with each class on what it means to be safe at school. Students became "playground detectives." They drew pictures of what playing safely on the playground would look like. They also brainstormed safe choices for things to do at recess. They performed the skit, *Recess Queen*. The skit focused on having a good time at recess while still being safe. The skit also taught the children strategies for befriending people at recess like asking other children to play, taking turns, and making sure everyone feels included.

In Kindergarten, Mrs. Bradley read the story "Billy Bully", teaching children to be kind to each other. First and second graders completed a worksheet called "The Playground Detective" to teach children how to play safely and responsibly in class and at recess. Our third graders read and performed the skit, "Recess Queen". This skit showed how the new girl in town tamed the bully.

Fourth graders completed a "Bullies Beware" worksheet, which taught students how to respond to a bully. A bullying case study was also discussed, and students had to choose the best way to respond, and explain why they chose that particular option. Fifth and sixth graders learned about cyber-bullying (using technology such as email, text messages and websites to bully). We read and discussed several case studies which taught students what to do in a bullying situation. Grades four through six also played "Bully Buster Bingo" (see photo) underlining the different ways to react and how to avoid dangerous bullying situations.

Technology in the County

Warren County Technology Coordinator's group is working on a collaborative project for students that will take place in January 2010. The target audience for this cross curricular project will be students in Grades 3-8. The focus is a character exchange that students will create using geometric shapes. Several design options will be offered. The project will include communicating with a partner class to create a "geometric character." The classes will then design the same character based on identical directions to see how close the two classes match on final design. More information to follow.

Third Grade Students are Puppeteers!



Mrs. Melhem's third grade class is "*Thinking Like Scientists*" this week. That is the name of Theme Three's Unit in the Rigby Reading series they are currently studying. In this theme, *What is Light*, students read and discussed the expository piece by Candyce Norvell: "Welcome To Shadow Puppet Theatre." Students read to infer what a puppeteer's job entails. After reading about the hard work a puppeteer is involved in during the production of a play, students got hands-on experiences as puppeteers as they wrote their own short stories, made stick puppets and used flashlights and cardboard box lids to create their very own 'shadow puppet theatre'.

United Nation's Day

On October 23rd United Nation's Day, our Port Colden students learned about the United Nations and celebrated through a variety of activities and games. As a culminating project, students created Autumn Handprint Peace Wreaths. Brass Castle students held an assembly which featured Mrs. Watters/Mrs. Pare's class. Students were given a brief history of the United Nations. The chorus of the song, "Heal the World", was sung by all the students and the class used sign language during the chorus. The song stressed the highlights of the United Nations' mission.

Emergency Preparedness

Throughout the school year the district has planned a variety of emergency drills. There are 2 bus emergency evacuation drills, 10 fire drills and 5 lockdown drills planned. The purpose of these drills is to prepare our students in the event of an emergency and to keep our staff ever vigilant. Officers from the township police department visited our classrooms in October in order to review with the students the importance of these drills. Each class practiced the drill under police supervision and then students had a chance to ask questions. The safety of our students, staff and parent / guardian visitors is of the utmost importance. If you have any questions regarding the aforementioned information or have other safety concerns, please contact your child's school.

Expressive Reading Plays Role in Fluency and Comprehension

Reading fluency is often measured by how fast and accurately a student reads. A recent study was able to establish a link between fluency and reading comprehension for students in grades 3, 5 and 7. Researchers used expressive reading or prosody "prosody refers to reading with expression; it is sometimes referred to as the melodic element in reading", to measure fluency and comprehension.

"The study was conducted at the Westside Community Schools, a small urban school district in Omaha Nebraska, and involved rating electronic recordings of 1204 students in the 3 grades reading 200-word passages. Students were rated with an instrument to assess prosody and fluency used by the Educational Service Unit #3, an education agency in Omaha serving 18 school districts with a total student population of 61,000 students and 5,000 teachers.

"Students who read with greater prosody in oral reading \ tended to have higher levels of comprehension when reading silently," the author continues, "Recent studies have made a case for a causal relationship between prosody and reading comprehension among 3rd- and 4th-graders. Moreover, a growing body of studies suggest that instruction aimed at improving prosody and automatic reading fluency leads to improved comprehension."

You can learn more about this study by reading the journal article: "*Reading Fluency: More Than Automaticity? More than a Concern for the Primary Grades?*" by Timothy Rasinski et al., *Literacy Research and Instruction*, Volume 48, 2009, pps. 350-361.

Upcoming Parent Conferences - Some Tips....

A parent-teacher conference is a time when the most important people in a student's life can talk about how that student is doing in school. It's a chance for you to ask questions about your child's class and their progress. It is also a time for you and the teacher to discuss ways you both can help your son or daughter reach their potential. Whether your child is in elementary, middle, or secondary school, parent-teacher conferences are important. Help your teacher help your child - together, you can help your child have a great school year.

Before the Conference: Make sure you schedule the appointment. Often parents may feel their child is doing well and a conference is not necessary. It's important for the student to know that their parent and their teacher communicate.

*Talk to your child.... Find out which subjects your child likes the best and the least. Ask why. Also, ask if there is anything your child would like you to talk to the teacher about. Help the child understand that you and the teacher are meeting to help him or her.

*Gather input from others.... If your spouse, another care-giving adult, or someone with pertinent information or insight (doctor, counselor, other guardian) can't attend the conference, ask for that person's concerns and questions before the conference.

*Make a list.... Before you go to the meeting, make a list of topics to discuss with the teacher. Along with questions about academics and behavior, you may want to talk to the teacher about the child's home life, personality, concerns, habits and hobbies, and other topics that may help the teacher in working with the child (e.g., religious holidays, music lessons, part-time jobs, a sick relative).

During the Conference: Establish rapport with your child teacher. As an icebreaker, take notice of something that reflects well upon the teacher. For example, thank the teacher for having made thoughtful notes on your child's homework or for the special attention in helping your child learn to multiply.

*Ask questions—Questions you ask during the conference can help you express your hopes for the student's success in class and for the teacher. It's a good idea to ask the important questions first, in case time runs out. The teacher's answers should help you both work together to help your child. If your child receives special services (e.g., gifted and talented programs, focused enrichment, speech or occupational therapy), be sure to ask about the frequency of services and your child's progress.

*Addressing problems—Parent-teacher conferences are a good time to discuss any difficulties (either academic or behavioral) a child might be having at school. Consider asking the following when faced with a problem your child may be having in class: a. Ask what is being done about the problem and what strategies seem to help at school; b. Develop an action plan that may include steps that parents can take at home and steps the teacher will take when the problem comes up at school; c. Schedule a follow-up conference and decide on the best way to stay in touch (phone, e-mail, or letters sent to the home). Develop an action plan: If the student needs help with a behavioral or an academic issue, you and the teacher should agree on specific plans—that you both will work on—to help your child do better. Be sure you understand what the teacher suggests. If it's not clear, ask him or her to explain.

*Set up a way to check on your child's progress. You and the teacher can decide how best to stay in touch, such as through phone calls, notes, or additional meetings.

*Ending the conference: End the conference by reviewing what you discussed and restating your action plan.

After the Conference: When discussing the conference with the child afterward, stress the good things that were covered and be direct about problems that were identified. If an action plan is in place, explain to the child what was arranged. When an action plan is in place, consider the following: Watch your child's behavior and check on class work and homework. Ask how the student feels about schoolwork. Stay in touch with the teacher to discuss your child's progress. Express appreciation as progress is made. A good way to promote a continuing relationship with the teacher is to say "thank-you" with a note or a telephone call. Continuing to keep in touch with the teacher, even if things are going well, can play an important role in helping the child do better in school. When a child knows parents and teachers are regularly working together, the child will see that education is a high priority requiring commitment and effort.