

Seward Elementary School



Parent Newsletter

December 2009

December 17--First Grade Music Program, 7 p.m. at High School Theater

December 23--Early Dismissal, 1:30 p.m.

December 24-31--No School, Winter Vacation

Lines from the Principal.....

Hello everyone! I know that last month I got pretty 'windy' and talked at length about our morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up procedures. Many of you probably said, "Do we have to hear about this again?" Sorry about that, but my reply is "Yes, you do!" It never hurts to have a little 're-fresher', especially when concerns are brought to my attention. So, thanks for listening!



Another topic that I would like to talk about here is school attendance. It is so important that children be in school to learn! Illness and family issues are valid reasons for missing school. What concerns me, as your principal, are the times we receive calls for absences that seem to be... how can I say this politely...a little unlikely, unbelievable, or unacceptable. Elementary school is truly the foundation for further learning. All of us, at Seward Elementary, take this responsibility very seriously. However, when children aren't in school, they are missing the

opportunity to learn! And, believe it or not, every day is important.

So extended vacation days during the school year concern me. Is there any way to plan those vacations during school break times? When a parent tells me that their car is broke down, is there any way to call a friend or neighbor to help out with a ride? When a parent says they are sick themselves, once again, is that a valid reason for not sending the child to school? I don't believe so! When the children miss school for those types of reasons, it sends the message that school isn't that important and it's okay to miss. Well, nothing could be further from the truth! We want children to be successful learners at our school and the only way that can happen is by being in school!

Well, that's enough for this time. Thanks for 'listening' once again. My intention is not to upset or offend anyone; I simply needed to deliver the message that school attendance is important! Finally, I want to wish all of you a very happy holiday season! May the spirit of the season fill your hearts and home today and always! Until next month...

Lana Daws

Grade Level News...

Kindergarten

A Kindergarten Recipe



Everyone is looking for that special holiday recipe to share with others. Here is the perfect recipe to create a kindergarten angel.

A dash of reviewing Reading Mastery take-homes

1 tbsp. of identifying the letter sounds

1 cup of reading every night

A heaping spoon full of handwriting on lined paper

A splash of number writing 1-20

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup of identifying numbers 1-15

3 cups of counting

A pinch of math games on the weekends

2 shakes of individual attention

2 tbsp. of quality family time

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed full of positive social skills

1 lb. of never ending love

Blend together to see a growing and successful kindergartener!

The Kindergarten team would like to welcome Sean Buckley in Mrs. Piskorski's class and Kaylee Brose in Miss Hotovy's class to Seward Elementary!

Miss Hotovy

First Grade

Our next skill for excellence is to teach your child to become a creative thinker. Every child is born with the potential to be a creative thinker, but somehow that part of a child's ability is far more developed in some children than in others, for one reason or another. Why does one child prove to be a creative thinker, while another doesn't appear to demonstrate the ability to think creatively?

The answer to that question from an educational point of view is because some children have been taught to think that way from parents, siblings, teachers, grandparents, etc. Children learn through modeling and good examples. When a student is asked to solve a problem that child must draw upon previous knowledge, experiences, skills, and creativity. If a child has had rich experiences and background knowledge, they will naturally become creative thinkers.

Creative thinkers are able to define and solve a problem by evaluating choices and considering the outcomes. The child first has to know what the problem is and define it. Then brainstorm how to solve that problem, while considering the outcome and/or consequences. Finally they have to come to a decision or plan of action to solve the problem. Then the child can adjust the plan if needed. This does sound very complicated for a first grader, doesn't it?

In kid terms, when helping your child with homework remind them there can many ways to get to an answer. When reading with the child talk to them about how the characters are problem solving. Have discussions with your child and talk about what they could do if they were the character in the book. Also, allow free play time and limit computer and television time. Free play-time allows the mind



to think creatively while computers and/or television gives the child something to do, not something to create themselves. Rainy and snowy inside days are great times to get the creativity flowing! This is a website with kid friendly activities that will help your child become a creative thinker.

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/arthur/activities/creative.html?cat=creative>

Mrs. Baumgartner

Second Grade

“Twas the month before Christmas and all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. . .” Well, let’s just say-- there IS plenty of “stirring” in second grade! Here are some highlights:



We will be studying Mexico this month. We will look at Mexican traditions that have become incorporated into our own, including piñatas and poinsettias. We will also be doing some bark paintings and learning a little Spanish!

In math, we are continuing to learn different strategies for solving addition and subtraction problems. Our work will include adding and subtracting multiples of ten (ex: $40 + 27$) and adding three 1-digit numbers (ex: $4 + 7 + 2$). We will also be doing some geometry—measuring line segments, drawing lines of symmetry, and identifying 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional shapes. Students are making steady progress on their math facts as well. Keep practicing these at home.

We continue to have a strong focus on language arts. As you know, our students “Walk

to Read” in the morning. Later in the afternoon, we practice grammar and writing skills. We concentrate on three areas in writing—organization, ideas, and conventions. Our writing begins with a “lead”, followed by the “body” (which includes the details), and finishes with the “closing”. This structure helps the students to write a well organized and sequential story. Throughout the process they are encouraged to use appropriate capital letters, punctuation marks, and correct spelling (these are called “conventions”). We usually illustrate the writing and then display them in the hallways. Other students and adults often comment on their writing and our students are very proud of their work!

The second grade team wishes you and your family a very Merry Christmas! Take time to snuggle up and read a good book together! There aren’t many gifts better than that!

Mrs. Hughes

Third Grade

Third grade started the kick off for the music programs that each grade level does. The third grade did fabulous with their songs about the U.S.A. We wanted to thank Mr. Janda for all the hard work that he did with the kids to prepare them.



This month the students learned a lot about Native Americans. A lot of the focus was on Native American culture and art. Each class made their own unique art projects. Mrs. Brumm’s class made parfleche pouches, Mrs. Witt’s class designed their own teepees, Mrs. Menze’s class made weavings and sand paintings, & Mrs. Shada’s class designed their own

wooden totem poles. The students were very enthusiastic about these projects and worked really hard to make theirs the very best. Make sure that you display your student's art work. They turned out great!

Mrs. Shada

Fourth Grade

Greetings from the fourth grade. We have been busy this month with multiplication facts, state assessments, preparing for the holidays, and many other classroom activities.



In science we're studying a unit on inquiry and the scientific method. The students love doing the various experiments in this unit. Thank you to those of you who have donated supplies so our experiments can be possible. Social Studies this month had the students learning about early Nebraska explorers. In reading we learned about illustrators, so some of the students illustrated a picture book, which we made into a class book.

Among other concepts, in math we continue to work on basic multiplication facts. We will soon be having our "facts challenge" and each class will be celebrating their successes soon.

Remember that we try to have outside recess as much as possible, so please help your child come to school dressed appropriately for winter weather. Winter coats, hats, gloves, etc. are a good idea this time of year.

We wish each family a blessed holiday season. Enjoy the break!

Mrs. Haberman

Library/Media News

November has been a busy month at Seward Elementary School. In Kindergarten, first and second grades we have been reading books about Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving. These special days make us proud to be citizens of the USA.

Third grade students are learning how to find more information about a book by looking at the title page. We like to compare copyright dates to determine the newest and oldest books in the library.

Learning about our new library catalog system has been fun and interesting for the fourth grade classes. We discovered we can search our library materials and internet sites with the same subject heading. So we find books in our library and information on the web--so much information! We will continue this study as we work in pairs to learn search techniques and strategies.

It doesn't seem possible that it is time to wish everyone a "Merry Christmas", but it is. Books make great gifts! And remember to take time during this busy season to share some quiet reading moments with your child/children. It will be the best time!



Mrs. Komenda

Greetings from the Gymnasium!

At the end of November we finished our unit with scooters. The unit included talking about safety and going over the rules with the scooters. We spent one day each on single scooter tasks, partner scooter tasks and scooter games. Some of the games we played were; scooter freeze tag, scooter team tag, scooter



blob tag and scooter express. If you do not know what scooters are ask your child to tell you about them. Scooters are one of the

most loved units by the students.

For Thanksgiving we worked on playing themed games. Ask your child to teach you how to play "Turkeys and Feathers", "Stuff the Turkey" and "Turkey Trot".

After Thanksgiving and until Christmas the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades will be working on a unit in hockey. At the end of the unit we will be playing scooter hockey, incorporating what we have learned in the last two units. The kindergarten and 1st grades will be working on a unit with manipulatives. In this unit we will be doing activities with hula hoops, bean bags, playground balls and paddles. Our activities will focus on eye/hand coordination tasks.

Mrs. Holliday

Music News

"Music, of all the arts, stands in a special region, unlit by any star but its own, and utterly without meaning... except its own."

-Leonard Bernstein, The Joy of Music

Kindergarten students are having fun doing folk dances with partners and large groups. Students have to remember multiple pieces of dance, and do them at the correct speed along with music. This kind of dance helps students grow in memory and their ability to keep a steady beat with music.

In First Grade, we are working very hard on Christmas music. We will be having a Christmas Concert on December 17th at 7:00 p.m. in the High School Theatre. Please mark that date in your calendars. As we get closer to the concert, look for songs being sent home to practice for memorization.

Second Grade is learning the musical ABC's! We have started practicing Solfege in earnest. Solfege is a system of teaching singing that has been around since the 14th century that helps students memorize musical



sounds and intervals. You may have heard the sounds used in Solfege before: Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do.

Recorders are coming! Third Grade students at Seward have the opportunity to expand their musical knowledge and expression through playing recorders. If you have not already turned in \$12 to Mr. Janda for a recorder and book, please do so. Every student needs both a recorder and book.

Fourth Grade students have just begun reading simple vocal songs independently. This is a great skill to learn, because it gives students the ability to pick up a copy of any song and figure out how it sounds on their own. We will be expanding this skill by learning how to find Do for any song using the Key Signature.

Mr. Janda

From the Counselor

I've shared with you what a school counselor does, what units we study, and parts of my job that I don't like. Here is one more valuable resource offered within our school that I wanted to share with you.

Our school offers a money saving, time saving, sanity-saving program called School



Community Intervention Program (S.C.I.P.). This program is offered in partnership with local counseling agencies and the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership (L.M.E.P.) It is

mainly a grant-funded program that reaches across the state to many different schools that allows family and/or school staff members to confidentially report concerns about a student. What we do at school is form a team of differentiated teachers and staff members who sit on a committee to help with the process. When a staff or family member makes a referral, we send out 10 random surveys to staff members that see that child throughout the school day, such as recess duty personnel, specials teachers, the nurse, lunch room personnel, etc. The confidential surveys are collected and the data is tallied on one form. The original forms are destroyed to maintain confidentiality and then a case manager will set up a meeting to let the family know what options are available if a problem is identified.

The two biggest money-saving resources that our SCIP program offers are FREE COUNSELING and a FREE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING. The free counseling consists of six free sessions that are held at the school. If you know much about therapists, the average bill is over \$100 an hour currently. That trans-

lates into over a \$600 gift to you as a family to receive counseling and identify if the presenting problem is one that can be resolved in six weeks or if further help is needed.

The complete mental health screening is especially valuable for older students. It is a one-time appointment but at the end of that you will receive a complete report in the mail of possible diagnoses, which again lets you know if there is a problem that needs to be addressed further.

If you have been "on the fence" with concerns about your child(ren) and would like to get some answers, don't hesitate to contact us at the school. You can call the office and ask for a SCIP team member or you can contact me directly as I am the current team facilitator. With the holiday seasons approaching, it is a good time to see if any concerns or problems are "brewing".

Until next time,

Mr. Lance Todd, counselor

From the School Nurse

Information about conjunctivitis (pinkeye): What is it? Conjunctivitis is an infection of the eyes. It can be caused by a virus, bacteria, or by allergies. The white parts of the eyes become pink or red; the eyes may hurt or feel itchy or scratchy; and the eyes may produce lots of tears and discharge (pus). In the morning, the discharge may make the eyelids stick together. How do you catch conjunctivitis? The pus is infectious. If children rub their eyes, they get it on their hands. They can then touch someone else's hands or touch an object. If other children get discharge on their hands and then touch their own eyes, they can catch it. It can spread easily among young children, who touch their eyes and everything else and who forget to wash their hands.

If your child has conjunctivitis be sure to wash everything that touches your child's eyes

(such as washcloths, towels, and toys). Do not share towels or washcloths. If your health care provider feels that bacteria may be causing conjunctivitis then an antibiotic medication will be prescribed. There is no specific treatment for conjunctivitis caused by viruses. Do not send your child to school until the day after you start giving the medicine. If your health care provider decides not to prescribe an eye medicine, ask for a note to ensure your child's attendance.

Marjorie Hansen, School Nurse