



# Backpack Express

## Dates for March

March 4, 2010	SDM Meeting	6:30pm
March 9, 2010	PTO Meeting	7:00pm
March 12, 2010	Progress Reports mailed home	
March 17, 2010	PARP Family Read-in	6:30pm
March 18-22, 2010	PTO Book Fair	
March 18, 2010	Board of Education Meeting	7:30pm
<b>March 26, 2010</b>	<b>Staff Development Day</b>	<b>Dismissal times</b>
	<b>Half day of school for students</b>	<b>11:15 Grades 6-8</b>
		<b>12:00 Grade K-5</b>
March 26, 2010	Fine Arts Festival	7:00pm
April 2-9, 2010	Spring Recess	No School



## Principal's Message

Although the snow has missed us for these past storms, I expect we will be catching a dose of the snow in the next few weeks. Please keep in mind that early dismissals due to snow are considered Emergency Dismissals and students will be transported by bus to their emergency contact as you have identified at the beginning of the school year.

If you have any questions about this process please contact our main office for clarification.

## Principal's Message Continued

The Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) program has begun and students are "Feeding Their Minds". Please take the time to read with your child at home and enjoy their interest in learning more from books.

Congratulations to the students that participated in our Boys and Girls Modified Basketball Teams, they both had a great season.

We wish our Odyssey of the Mind Teams good luck in their competition this Saturday, (February 27) at the Rensselaer High School.

Thank you for your continued support of Gardner Dickinson School.

## Kindergarten News

**Kindergarten is off to a magnificent March.** Please have your children participate in our PARP (Parents As Reading Partners) program throughout the month of March. It is essential that you read to your children each night and that they get to read the books that go home as well. Kindergartners have done a great job in math learning about graphing and telling time. In the month of March, we will be learning how to add! So, please practice with your children at home! I am so pleased with our Kindergartener's writing. Everyone has really taken off with their writing in the past month. Students who try to fill up their page with writing receive a \$100.00 sticker. This \$100.00 sticker has encouraged all of our kindergartners to do their best writing possible. Keep up the great writing. Later in the month of March, we will be having a "Pajama Party Friday." I will let everyone know when this is in the Kindergarten Monthly. Students will get to wear their pajamas to school, bring in a favorite bedtime story and a favorite stuffed animal! Information will also be coming home soon about our next field trip, which will be to see a play. Please keep reading, reading, reading with your kindergartners and enjoy the month of March!

## First Grade News

The Fantastic First Graders have been growing as responsible, respectful, independent learners!! They are using many strategies to make sure what they read looks right, sounds right, and makes sense. Please read with your child every night. Parents may read aloud to their child or you may have your child read aloud to you!! The children are becoming risk takers

## First Grade News Continued

when writing. It is important for the students to get their thoughts down on paper and then go back and reread their writing to make sure what they wrote makes sense. They also are using editing checklists to help them check for appropriate capital letters, spacing, and punctuation in their writing. A great strategy that the students are using more when they are writing is to circle words they are not sure how to spell and then check the words they circled. In math, the children have learned time to the hour. The first graders are doing a nice job reading the time to the hour on an analog clock and a digital clock. The First Graders have been earning money as part of our positive behavior plan throughout the school year. The students count the money they have earned in their piggy banks one on one with their teacher each week. Money may be a challenging concept for some first graders. Keep up the great work practicing counting money at home!! Our students are terrific scientists too! They do a superb job making observations, hypothesizing, and sharing their experiments. We have learned so much from the Scientists of the Week!! The Most Valuable Person (MVP) program is a great way to spotlight our special first grade friends and learn more about them!! You are all very special and unique individuals!! We enjoyed a Valentine's Day Ice Cream Social and exchanged Valentines that we wrote to our classmates on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>!! Thank you to all the wonderful families for volunteering to organize and prepare for our gathering!! You are very kind and generous families! Continue to work hard to be the best person you can be!!

## Second Grade News

Second grade has had a fantastic start to 2010! The students were excited to start the "Balancing & Weighing" science kit. They are great scientists. Miss Adams, Miss Cronin and Mrs. B. are impressed! Miss Cronin's class has been working hard on a poetry unit in writing while Miss Adams' class learned all about letter writing and wrote letters to their favorite authors. The classes also learned all about Martin Luther King Jr. and his "big words". In math, second grade has been learning to add and subtract with regrouping. Coming up in March, the classes will be learning about time and money. We have been working on practicing PowerPoint presentations so that when they do their upcoming penguin project and PowerPoint presentation, they will be pros! *Second graders - keep up your great reading habits at home!*

## Third Grade News

Third grade did an AMAZING job on their Japan travel brochures! They worked really hard on them and you should be very proud!! We had a wonderful Field Trip to Koto's Japanese Steak House on February 4th to culminate our unit on Japan. The kids really enjoyed themselves. It was quite a SHOW! We will be traveling to South America next to learn about the customs and culture of Brazil. We will be creating a non-fiction book geared for lower grade levels to learn about Brazil as our Final Project. We will be completing this project in school.

Third grade is working diligently on reading comprehension strategies to help us better understand what we are reading. We have been "talking back to our books" and practicing "thin and thick" questions. Please ask your children about these strategies and how to use them in their reading. They should be applying them in their daily reading homework.

In Math, we are learning multiplication facts. We will continue to practice in school daily using games, center activities and pop quizzes. Please continue to practice flash cards for 15 minutes each night. "practice makes perfect!"

We are finishing up our chemical tests in science and will soon begin our unit on plant growth and development. The students will grow their own fast plants and learn about the life cycle of a flowering plant and how our insect friends continue to keep that cycle going throughout the seasons.

Thank you to Mrs. Tomlinson in Mrs. Mahoney's class and Mrs. Kane in Mr. VanLeuven's Class for organizing our Valentine Exchange get-togethers and a thank you to all the parent volunteers too! We are so lucky to have you! The kids had a great time!

We are looking forward to SPRING! Thank you for all you do!

Mrs. Mahoney

Mr. VanLeuven

## Fourth Grade News

Fourth graders have been working hard during this chilly, snow-free season! In Science, we finished up our electricity unit by making Question and Answer boards on a variety of topics. If you matched the right question and answer a light bulb would light up! We also made PowerPoint projects as a culminating activity. In Social Studies we took an interesting journey back in time! We learned about the struggle for independence during The American Revolution. Ask your child if they wanted to be a Loyalist or a Patriot. We have been using Smart Pals in Math as we studied time and money. ELA has been a time to explore great books such as Coraline and The Sign of the Beaver. Keep on reading fourth grade! Happy thoughts for spring!

## Fifth Grade News

Fifth grade has just completed an author study in writing on Cynthia Rylant. The students used her examples to help them develop and publish their own writing piece. In math we have been working on a unit on fractions and we will soon begin a unit on geometry. The students in science have enjoyed their land and water unit, especially when they had to try and construct a dam to hold back water. PARP will soon begin for reading so continue to read each night. 5D has only 10 more books to complete to reach their goal. In SS we will soon begin a study of the American Revolution. Thank you for all the contributions so far to the Haiti Fund and Box Tops for Education. We can't wait to see how much we collect for Haiti and our school.

## Art Room News

Hello Everyone,

We've had lots of creativity brewing in the art room this month. Middle school has been busy getting ready for the big art show in March. Kindergarten made "creatures" out of a variety of recycled materials. The children had fun watching their creations come to life. First grade made clay dinosaurs and are currently studying Matisse's fish painting. Second grade was very excited about completing their clay penguins and taking them home. Third grade is continuing their Japanese study by comparing Contemporary Japanese art with traditional Japanese art. Fourth grade is continuing their Native American exploration with clay teepees next week. Fifth grade will be included with our middle school art show this year with the inclusion of their Picasso based sculptures made from wire hangers and stockings.

It has been a welcomed addition to have sixth grade back in the art room this semester. The children have been very enthusiastically working on their Chinese Dragon Kites for the art show. Seventh grade continues their semester long study of Pop Art by making record album covers and "Larger than Life" candy bags- what a creative group they are. Advanced art continues to amaze the whole school with their large cartoon based projects and they're currently working on a tree project with the medium of their choice.

Thanks for your continued support of the art program and donations of recycled materials. I look forward to seeing you at the March art show. Mrs. Mitchell

## Music Room News

Congratulations to our music students who participated in the January All-County Music Festival at Troy High School. Junior Band: Connor Gray - Clarinet, Jessica Elder - Clarinet, Lauren Edler - Alto Saxophone and Liisi Vink-Lainas - Alto Saxophone. Elementary Chorus: Tom Clark, Louis Blair, Ryan Brown, Sierra Flowers, Damian Rose, and Mariah Thomas.

Congratulations to the following students who will be participating in the March All-County Music Festival at Berlin High School on March 25th and 27th: Junior Chorus: Danielle Halpin, Jessica Marsh and Annie Paone. Elementary Band: Rebecca LeBelle - Clarinet, Jacob Loiselle - Alto Saxophone, Owen Miller - Percussion and Sarah Meemken - Flute.

The music and art department will have our Annual Arts Festival on Friday, March 26th at 7:00PM. Mrs. Mitchell is working with our middle school students on modern pop art. The art projects will be on display throughout the hallways. Our Chorus will be performing various pop music selections. The Concert Band will be going "retro" with music from the 70's. Musical performances will take place in the cafeteria. Please join us in celebrating the arts in our school!

On April 17th, 15 of our music students will be participating in the NYSSMA (New York State School Music Association) solo and ensemble festival at Ravena High School. Students have begun preparing their solos and scales. The difficulty of the solos are in a range from Level 1 (easiest) to Level 6 (professional). We are pleased to have students working on levels 1-5 for the event.

Thank you to all our parents for supporting your child's musical education!

## Media Center News

Hello once again from the Media Center! We have had a great month in the library!

Our wonderful **kindergartners** are just now making the leap to choosing their own books from the shelves. Prior to February Break, the kindergartners chose from pre-selected titles. This is a very exciting step, and one they were really ready for! Keep up the good work remembering to return their books every week so everyone can participate in book exchange!

The **first graders** continue to astound me with their unbelievable excitement and abilities. I have been flooded with books made by the students that they want cataloged and entered into our collection. What is most impressive is that these books often include a correct spine label/call number that the author has created themselves - kudos!

The **second graders** are also doing great! They've practiced simple research and reading for

## Media Center News Continued

content as we explore the topic of penguins.

The **third graders** wrapped up a long unit on 398.2 where we studied tall tales, folk tales, and fairy tales. They are truly connoisseurs regarding the subtle differences now!

**Fourth and fifth graders** are both learning all about the Reference section. We're focused on encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, and almanacs. Next, we'll move on to our OPAC (on-line public access catalog) and online databases. Before you know it, they'll all be expert information gatherers!

## Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) News

Our Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) program is underway for 2010! Our theme this year is "Books are Brain Food: Feed Your Mind". Your child should have received a packet of PARP materials from his/her classroom teacher and should be reading with you at home every night. Just initial your child's PARP calendar each night that you read together and have your child return the calendar to his/her teacher on March 23. Please join us on Wednesday, March 17 for the PTO Book Fair from 5:30-6:30 and our PARP Family Read-in from 6:30-7:30. There is a permission slip in the PARP packets that should be returned no later than March 15. We hope to see you there! Keep reading!

Mrs. Curran, Reading Teacher

## Odyssey of the Mind News

Our students participated in the Region 4 Odyssey of the Mind competition at Rensselaer High School on Saturday February 27, 2010. This year's teams were as follows:

### Grades 5/6

Olivia Casale  
Brittany Kane  
Hannah Avery  
Damian Rose  
Jenna LeFevre  
Sarah Meemken  
Madison Akots  
Coach: Miss Cronin  
Coach: Miss Adams

### Grades 7/8

Elissa Kane  
Lauren Elder  
Jessica Elder  
Evelyn Henkin  
Liisi Vink-Lainas  
Lizzie Karam  
Michelle Lauletta  
Coach: Mrs. Carbone  
Coach: Mrs. Keane

## Cafeteria News

### EAT BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL!

Mornings can be really crazy...the alarm doesn't go off...the kids don't want to get up...there's no time to eat breakfast before the bus comes...or they're just not ready to eat. Or maybe your teenager grabs a can of soda and a candy bar on the way to school. If this sounds like your house, we have good news for you.

Breakfast is served at school! School breakfast will give your child a healthy start to the day. A nutritious breakfast helps students be more alert so they can learn more in class. Breakfast has vitamins and nutrients for a strong and healthy body.

Breakfast at school is affordable, too. If you qualify for free and reduced price meals, you also qualify for the breakfast program, with no additional paperwork. You can't find a healthy breakfast at such a low cost anywhere else.

Help your child start the day right with school breakfast!

Free and Reduced prices apply for breakfast and lunch, so stop by the café first!

## PTO News

PTO would like to thank all of you who have volunteered with all of our events and fundraisers so far this year!! We really appreciate all the time committed to helping the PTO and our school!

Family Movie Night was a huge success! Thanks to Mrs. McCormick, Mrs. Newell and Mr. Lynskey for all of their help in setting up the equipment needed for movie night. Thank you to Michelle Fanning and Eve Stoner for the help in assisting Michelle LaVoy with this event.

We have lots of exciting activities coming up. Mark your calendars for Jump Rope for Heart, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Krause's candy fundraiser will be chaired by Mary Lou Leferve and Marilyn Haplin sale ends March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Tina Turbiasz will be organizing the bowling tournament again this year. It was so successful last year that we will extend it another weekend this year! Also Michele French and Eve Stoner are already planning our book fair scheduled for March 17<sup>th</sup>- March 22<sup>nd</sup>. We also have the Father/Daughter dance and our apparel contest/sale drawing closer. We have even more fun activities to come, stay tuned!

Please come and join us at our meetings we value your ideas and opinions. Join us for our next meeting which will be March 9th. Hope to see you there.