



Backpack Express

Message from the Superintendent/Principal

Dear Parents,

I hope this note finds you well and staying warm during these February days. I have thoroughly enjoyed my first several weeks at Gardner Dickinson and feel so fortunate to be here. The faculty, staff, students and parents have been welcoming and wonderful to work with. I had the pleasure of attending the Talent Show on January 27 and witnessed the wonderful support of community as students showcased their talents. The students all did an outstanding job! Many thanks to the PTO and Mrs. Newell for organizing and sharing of their time.

During the upcoming months, Gardner Dickinson will participate in several theme days. These days were organized in collaboration with the Eight Grade Student Officers. Students in grades K-8 will all have an opportunity to wear their pajamas on February 17 for our first Pajama Day. This will be followed by Twin Day on March 30, and Spirit Day on May 15 and June 20. More information will be sent home regarding how students can participate in these school wide events. In addition, please note that the date of our Field Day has been changed to Monday, June 18. Field Day will include all students, grades K-8. Again, more information regarding Field Day will be sent home as that day approaches.

As you know, Mr. Lysnkey will be retiring at the end of February. We all wish Mr. Lysnkey the very best as he leaves us. We will be planning a special send off for him and will notify you as to those plans when they are finalized. We will conduct a search to replace Mr. Lysnkey and will work with an Interim Assistant Principal until we are able to hire someone permanently. Ms. Suzanne Moore, retired South Colonie Elementary Principal and District ELA, Math, and Social Studies Coordinator (K-8) will act as interim Assistant Principal beginning on March 1. She will work three days with Mr. Lysnkey to ensure a smooth transition prior to him leaving. If you should see her at school, please welcome her.

Safety is always at the forefront of our minds. Please see a special safety alert on page 3 of the Backpack Express.

Again, it has been my pleasure to serve the Wynantskill Union Free School District during the past month. Please feel free to contact us with any questions. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Henkel

Dates for February

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| February 2, 2012 | All-County Music Festival Rehearsal | 3:20 pm |
| | Girls Basketball Game Away | |
| | Schenectady Mt. Pleasant MS | 4:15pm |
| | Boys Basketball Game Away | |
| | Schenectady Mt. Pleasant MS | 4:15pm |
| February 4, 2012 | All-County Music Festival | All Day |
| | Lansingburgh High School | |
| February 7, 2012 | PTO Meeting | 6:30pm |
| February 9, 2012 | Girls Basketball Game Home | 4:15pm |
| | vs. Amsterdam | |
| | Boys Basketball Game Home | 5:45pm |
| | vs. Amsterdam | |
| February 10, 2012 | Builder's Club Valentine's Dance | 7:00pm—10:00pm |
| February 13, 2012 | Girls Basketball Game Home | 4:15pm |
| | vs. Troy | |
| | SDM Meeting | 5:30pm |
| February 16, 2012 | Board of Education Meeting | 7:00pm |
| February 17, 2012 | Pajama Day Grades K-8 | All Day |
| February 20—24, 2012 | Mid-Winter Recess | NO SCHOOL |



Safety Alert

Due to several potentially dangerous incidents recently during arrival and dismissal, we need to remind parents to please refrain from driving in the circle in the front of building in the morning as the buses arrive and unload students. The following safety procedures need to be adhered to:

- The Drop Off Zone, by the crosswalk, is to be used for drop off only. Students should cross the crosswalk and walk on the sidewalk to the building.
- When unloading your child in the Drop Off Zone, always do so with your child exiting on the passenger side and NOT on the traffic side. This is extremely dangerous as cars are pulling in, dropping off and going around other cars during this time.
- Should you need to wait or park, please find a parking place in the parking lot as parking in the Drop Off Zone hinders the flow of traffic.

If you need to get out of your car to unload or assist your child, you should park in the parking lot and walk your child to the crosswalk or the school entrance.

While we understand that there may be times during the day, after 9:00 am and before 2:00 pm, that you may need to temporarily park in the circle in the front of the building, please note that this area is designated as a fire lane in which parking is prohibited. During arrival (any time before 9:00am) and dismissal times, (2:00-3:30pm) cars are completely prohibited from being in the circle or anywhere along the front of the building. We truly appreciate your cooperation in this important safety matter.

Kindergarten News

Kindergarten continues to learn and grow on a daily basis. It is amazing to watch your child flourish in the classroom. We are working very hard with our reading!! The students are doing a wonderful job using the strategies they learn in class. Thank you for your continued support reading with your child every night. This will certainly help ensure your child's reading success this year. We encourage you to work on Math Facts to the sum of 5 at home as well. We are truly enjoying your children every day!

First Grade News

First grade is an amazing group of students! They have had an exciting second quarter. Students have been studying winter weather in science; they are reading thermometers and measuring wind speed! Did you know first grade is full of poets? We have been using adjectives to write sandwich poems, shape poems, sense poems and acrostic poems. In math first grade is learning about place value and still mastering their addition and subtraction. Each first grader is reading for about 20 minutes independently in school everyday!! These first graders are making tremendous progress. Miss Adams and Miss Griffin are very proud of all of you!

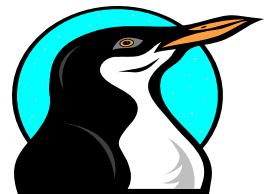
Second Grade News

2012 has started off great in 2nd Grade! We completed our Maps and Globes unit in Social Studies, celebrated holidays like Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Chinese New Year and Compliment Day.

In Math the students have worked extremely hard in 2 and 3 digit addition, with and without regrouping. We have created new Guided Math Centers and love sharing what we learn with Mrs. Morrow and our friends! Our next unit will be on subtraction with regrouping.

Throughout February Second Grade is completing a cross-curricular unit about penguins. The students have been fascinated by the different types of penguins. We have explored facts about penguins, their habitat and their unique qualities. Do you know how penguins **feed** their babies? Ask any 2nd grader and they will tell you a little penguin poem with the answer!

Thank you for your continued support at home!



Third Grade News

3rd Grade is enjoying learning about many different types of biographies! We have been working on fractions in math and continue to learn more of their multiplication facts. Don't forget to keep practicing the 2's, 5's, 9's, 10's and 11's! In social studies we have been learning about Italy and the people who live there. We all realized that we really love Italian food, especially pizza! Lastly in science we are diving into our chemical unit. All the kids are excited and think we are going to blow things up, but don't worry we aren't blowing anything up! Thanks for all your support!

Fourth Grade News

Fourth grade is having a great winter! Be sure to check out our social studies projects in the front showcase. We worked in groups to research 4 different areas of Native American life. Then we created projects that represented these areas. Fractions are fun for fourth graders! After creating our own fraction bars, we have explored equivalent fractions and fractions on a number line. In science we are exploring motion and design using K'nex. Check out our hallway for the blueprints of the vehicles we created. We will continue to learn through K'nex by using rubber band energy and force. Our picture books will be shared with other classes soon. We used many great authors, such as Judith Viorst and Karen Hesse, as a springboard for our writing. These mentor authors showed us how to use alliterations, circular structure, repetition and hyphenated phrases to jazz up our writing. Stop by to check them out!

Fifth Grade News

The 5th grade learned about customary and metric units of measurements in math. The students enjoyed walking a distance of 1 mile and 1 km to help them better understand how far they were. In science, we have started a new kit on floating and sinking. The students have tested a variety of items they brought in from home to see if they would sink or float. They also have been learning how density effects whether an object will sink or float. The 5th graders enjoyed having mock trials in social studies in which the Native Americans and the New World settlers argued their points as to who should be allowed to settle the land. In ELA, the students have been sharing memories as part of our memoir unit. Everyone has enjoyed listening to the stories

Art Room News

The children have been creating some absolute masterpieces and I am so proud of all of their hard work! Kindergarten has had fun printing with hair "rollers" the past few classes. They loved the interesting texture and mixing of colors created through the use of printing with such an unusual object. We will be moving on to life sized self portraits next week. First Grade recently finished their abstract circular works inspired by Sonia and Robert Delaunay. The children loved working with the mixed media of oil pastel and watercolors. Second Grade recently finished the cutest 3D snowmen I have ever seen. The lesson was inspired by one of our very own Second Grade students, Nelson Darling. He brought in a lesson plan he had pho-

Art Room News Continued

tocopied and the kids loved it! Third Grade continues with their study of Global art. We just traveled to Italy and made our own beautiful renditions of stained glass. The projects came out wonderfully, and are currently on display in our cafeteria. Fourth Grade is continuing with our Picasso Unit. The children recently finished their cardboard guitars and are working on Picasso inspired collages of the "Three Musicians." Fifth Grade continues to work on their paper mache masks inspired by multicultural mask prints we viewed in class. I can't wait to see them done and on display. Sixth Grade recently completed their last few projects of the year and will be moving on to music. I enjoyed working with them on Egyptian Art, Greek Art, and many other beautiful pieces. Seventh Grade completed their semester and study of "Pop Art" and the other seventh grade group will be beginning their "Pop Art" study next week. Our Eighth Grade Accelerated Group has been so busy with finishing up portraits made from video tape and they will be beginning a mural in the next couple of weeks!

I am excited to say that I have a wonderful student teacher working with me for the next five weeks. Her name is Christina Jansson and she comes to us from the Sage Colleges. Here is her message to you: "I am grateful for this opportunity. It has been a wonderful experience working with all of the students as they create works of art for the upcoming school-wide art show. A special thank you to Mrs. Mitchell who has been truly inspirational. Her dedication to the students and the community are evident every minute of the day. Together we are creating a positive learning environment where students thrive and develop a life long appreciation for art!

Please remember to come to the "Fine Arts Festival" on Friday, March 16th!

Sincerely, Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Jansson

Music Room News

Our kindergarten students have been exploring how music moves. In class we created a felt and string vocal map and performed our compositions for our classmates. Each student also drew a vocal map and sang their composition for Mrs. Newell. Wow! What great compositions and nice singing voices our kindergartners have. We are starting to read music notation and will be working on creating our own rhythmic composition.

Our students in 1-5 have started learning songs for our spring concert. (May 8th) We are working on American folk songs and Patriotic songs. You may have heard the tunes Yankee Doodle, Minute Man or This Land is Your Land being sung at home. They should continue to practice these songs. We will be adding more songs from our American heritage during each class. The students have also enjoyed learning how to square dance to Yankee Doodle!

In grades 1-3, we have been learning about the Legend of William Tell, which inspired the great composer Gioachino Rossini to write one of his most famous works - The William Tell Overture.

Music Room News Continued

We are learning about the form of the Overture and various beat patterns. At the conclusion of the lesson, we will utilize a parachute to exercise our ears by showing the form while keeping a steady beat!

Grade 4 will be learning to play the recorder in early February. They will receive a new recorder in class and will need to practice at home. Please remind them to bring the recorder to every class.

The 7th grade music class has finished their *Create a Music Game* project. They have enjoyed creating a music game based on their knowledge of music. Games created included: *Music Life and Careers*, *Guess That Song*, *Musical Headbandz* (Guess the Artist), *On the Red Carpet* (Trivia, charades, songs and artists questions to answer as you get ready for the MTV awards) and *Musical Basketball* (answer random music questions to earn a chance to shoot a basket for points).

The 6-8 chorus and band are preparing for the Arts Festival (March 16th). This year we will be performing jazz and swing music. There will also be art displays from our students throughout the building. Thank you Mrs. Mitchell for coordinating this!

Congratulations to the following students for being selected to participate in the Rensselaer All-county Music Festival on February 2 and 4 at Langsingingburg High School: Elementary All-County Band Members: Michael LaBelle - Trumpet, Steven McClain - Percussion and Natalie Stoner - Trumpet.

Junior All-County Chorus Members: Louis Blair, Sierra Flowers and Corbin Schitchl.

The NYSSMA solo festival will be held on March 31st at Hackett Middle school in Albany. Students interested in performing a solo to be graded by a certified NYSSMA adjudicator should see Mrs. Newell as soon as possible. We will be selecting our solo pieces in February.

Media Center News

Got the mid-winter blahs? Come to the Media Center and get a dose of excitement! We have 60 new titles on the way including the latest in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney - aptly titled, *Cabin Fever*. Also included in this order are the newly announced 2012 Caldecott and Newberry winners, as well as new nonfiction on the U.S. Military, the Titanic, and ninjas! Be sure to stop in and get your February fix before all the best titles are taken!

Kindergarten is doing a fantastic job as they transition to selecting their own books from the shelves using "book finders". We're also right in the middle of a perfect winter-time author study showcasing the beautifully illustrated books of Jan Brett.

Media Center News Continued

First grade is going "down under" with Mem Fox, the award-winning children's author from Australia. We've gone to her Web site and watched Mem sing one of her books, learned lots of interesting facts about Australia, and best of all, enjoyed reading several of her wonderful stories together. In class, the students are learning to write in her style, too.

Second grade is wrapping up a fun unit on Tomie de Paola (ask them to tell you some facts about him - they're all experts now!), and will be starting a unit celebrating Black History this month.

Third grade is still studying "398.2" and is currently focusing on Fairy Tales. In keeping with the 3rd grade social studies curriculum, our theme is "Cinderella Around the World" for this part of our unit. We'll be seeing how this story is told in Ireland, China, and the U.S. before moving on to Tall Tales next month.

Fourth grade is learning about "Literary Genres". As a special treat, we'll be playing "Genre Bingo" after our unit test later this month!

Fifth grade is reviewing "Parts of Books" in preparation for learning about bibliography. We'll be discussing the important concepts of copyright laws and plagiarism, as well as working on creating citations and bibliographies for a wide variety of resources ranging from books, to magazines, to Internet sites. We'll be practicing writing our own citations as well as creating them using the Web tool, EasyBib.com.

Finally, I again encourage everyone to explore our new **e-book** collection. Just go to our on-line catalog (<http://gds.ind.opalsinfo.net>) and type "ebk" into the search box. This will bring up our 248 electronic titles. Once you've found one you like, click on the item, and in the record, you'll see "Weblink to more info". That will take you right to the e-book online where you can either read the book on your computer, or download it onto a device of your choice. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me anytime.

Happy reading!

Physical Education News

Children at Gardner Dickinson have put their best foot forward in Physical Education. They are playing hard, playing safe, and working well together. Students in the upper grades have been engaged in a floor hockey and a volleyball unit. In floor hockey, students we're taught how to stickhandle, shoot and positional play. Students did a great job being safe in this unit! In volleyball, students learned the rules governing the sport. Skills taught we're serving, underhand pass, overhead pass, and even spiking! We culminated with tournament play. The lower grades also participated in lead up hockey games and lead up volleyball activities

Physical Education News Continued

utilizing balloons and beach balls. Also, on a consistent basis they are involved with locomotor skills in their warm up activities. Other activities they excelled in were "Pins and Rims" (throwing practice), and "Schoolbus". Schoolbus is a GD favorite whereas the children construct the buses with scooters and mats...then have to push each other around a pretend Main Avenue. What a great strength training workout! Any questions at anytime, please do not hesitate to contact Coach Akots or Coach Albright. Gardner Dickinson kids have really stepped it up this year!

Arts in Education

"Every Picture Tells a Story - But how?"

The Arts in Education Committee is excited to announce that acclaimed children's book illustrator, **John Steven Gurney**, will be coming to Gardner Dickinson on **March 9th!** John has illustrated the popular series, *A to Z Mysteries* and *The Bailey School Kids*, as well as the national sensation, *Dinosaur Train*. He will be meeting with the students in large group assemblies as well as conducting three small group workshops throughout the day.

Health Office News

Attention 5th grade parents;

New York State Public Health Law requires that all students entering Grade 6 have booster vaccination for Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (Tdap). This vaccination is administered at age 11, although occasionally a form of it might be administered at age 10.

Please contact your Health Care Provider to schedule the booster at your child's 11 year old physical exam, and then send in verification of your child having received the vaccine.

If your child's 11th birthday is after the start of the school year, he/she will need to obtain the vaccine within 14 days of their birthday.

Please feel free to call or email any questions.

Cafeteria

We are off to a great start here in the cafeteria this year. We will be serving favorites of the students from years past and also be adding a few new items to try this year. The sign up sheet looks different than it has in the past so be sure to look carefully for there have been some new additions to choose from. We encourage everyone to sign up for lunch.

A complete lunch consists of the daily entree on the menu and side dishes that are offered on that day. These side dishes usually consist of a vegetable, pasta, rice or tossed salad, a fruit and milk. We try to have a fresh fruit available in addition to canned fruits as often as possible. Living in the northeast we have a variety of local fruits and vegetables to choose from.

Besides the items listed on the monthly menu we also offer alternatives everyday. We have daily specials of salad or sandwich of the day. The students can also get subs, sandwiches, and garden or chef salads in place of these daily items. We try to offer different items so that the students have a variety to choose from.

Allergies and special dietary needs

We are informed by the school nurse if any students have food allergies or special dietary needs. We will offer these students alternatives to our usual menu, such as juice instead of milk etc.. Please notify the nurse if your child has any special dietary needs.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or concerns please call the cafeteria at 283-4600, extension 22.

PTO News

First and foremost PTO is glad to welcome our New Superintendent Dr. Lisa Henkel. She is a pleasure to work with and has already taken so many steps in promoting the morale in our school.

The 2nd Annual GD's Got Talent Show rehearsals are scheduled for January 25 at 6pm in the Gym. The show is on Friday January 27th at 6pm in the Gym. Thank you to Michelle Lavoy and her team for getting this all together for our students. Concessions will be available, a performance video of the show will be available to order for \$7, and a GD Royals apparel table will be set up to take apparel orders. Also this year a step has been taken to include more of our community by inviting the St. Jude's Residential Community to the talent show. Thank you to our Art Department for making posters for St. Jude's. We have so many tal

PTO News Continued

ented students and it will be a great show! Mark your calendars!!

Restaurant night is being planned at Paolo Lombardi's. More info to follow.

Bowling will be held on Saturday March 3rd and 10th this year at Hi-way Recreation in Wynantskill. Registration will be going out soon. Thank you to Tina Turbiasz for getting this all together.

Jump Rope for Heart, to benefit the American Heart Association, will be held on Friday March 2nd from 6pm-8pm in the gym. We are planning on setting up different stations that will have information for the students about healthy eating and exercise. Details are still being worked out, we will be needing volunteers to help run the stations, and possibly having the older students learn a routine that they may like to demonstrate. This is a great time for families to get together for a night of movement!! More information and donation packets will be going out by February 3rd.

TRI-CITY VALLEY CATS NIGHT has been added to our fundraising events!!! We have voted on a game night date of Thursday June 28th with FIREWORKS!! The tickets will cost \$15 for Premium Box seats, \$13 for Reserved Box seats, and \$10 for Grandstand seating. All tickets will include a concession voucher good for a hotdog, soda and chips. A family of 4 can enjoy a night out with dinner, a game, and fireworks for \$40!! Our profit will vary depending on the amount of tickets that are sold, but will be no less than \$3.50 per ticket. This fundraiser not only helps PTO but it allows families and friends to get together at the yearend for a night of fun at a great value!

Gardner Dickinson's Community Tag Sale is another fundraiser added this year. We are hoping for sometime in late April or early May. Details to follow, this is still a work in progress, even the name of the event. Any suggestions will be welcomed!!

Also coming soon is the Father Daughter Dance, and the Mother Son Event. Details to follow.

Thank you Mrs. Henkel for approving a new Ice Cream Truck for our Year End Treat for the students and saving PTO \$600 in the process!!

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 7th, 2012.

Thank you for your continued support!