



Backpack Express

April Dates

April 2, 2009	Shared Decision Meeting	6:30pm
April 3, 2009	Builders Club Activity Night Grade 3—5 (Cafeteria)	7:00pm
April 6, 2009	Personal Safety Programs	9:00am
April 7, 2009	Personal Safety Programs K—3 Storyteller Motoko	9:00am 9:00am
April 10, 2009	Good Friday Holiday	NO SCHOOL
April 13—17, 2009	Spring Recess	NO SCHOOL
April 21, 2009	NYS Science Performance Grade 4 Boys Baseball @ Home PTO Meeting	 4:15pm 7:00pm
April 23, 2009	NYS Science Performance Grade 8 Report Cards mailed home Boys Baseball @ LaSalle Board of Education Meeting	 4:15pm 7:30pm
April 24, 2009	Kindergarten Graduation Pictures 3rd Grade Field Trip (Spectrum Theatre)	
April 25, 2009	Boys Baseball @ Home	11:00am
April 28, 2009	NYS Science Written Grade 4 Boys Baseball @ Bishop Gibbons	 4:15pm
April 29, 2009	Kindergarten Field Trip (Palace Theatre)	9:00am
April 30, 2009	NYS Science Written Grade 8 Boys Baseball @ Home	 4:15pm

Principal's Message

Well Spring is in the air and our students are excited to have a change in weather.

We are excited to recognize our successes thus far this year including our Odyssey of the Mind teams. The Middle School Team won First Place in the Division Two Competitions while our Fifth and Sixth Grade Team took Fourth Place. The students all worked hard in these competitions and I am proud of their representation of our school. Please congratulate the team members as you see them. The Middle School Team went to the Odyssey of the Mind Sectionals in Binghamton; they came in Sixth Place in this competition. What a great job they did.

We are also proud of our NYS School Music Association performers who performed well and received ratings of exceptional or distinguished level of accomplishment on their instruments at the solo festival. Congratulations to our Band and Chorus members on their March performances at the Albany concourse and at the Arts Festival.

Thank you to all the parents for your dedication and support of our students. They could not have these successes without it.

Kindergarten News

Happy Spring!! Kindergarten is diligently working on reading, writing and math!! We had a great time participating in PARP this year! The children really enjoyed earning their free books from Mrs. Curran. Thank you for going the extra mile with your children. This week we are anxious to make Vegetable Soup!! We will also have a tray of fresh veggies for the children to enjoy. We are looking forward to our upcoming field trip to The Palace Theatre to see James and the Giant Peach. We will be heading there on Wednesday, April 29th. Please send in permission slips ASAP. Enjoy your April vacation!!!

First Grade News

The First Graders have been learning and growing in all areas. Using our Science Kits, we have been comparing and measuring using standard and nonstandard units of measurement. They used 12 inch rulers and yard sticks as their standard units of measurement. They used their bodies, their feet, their arms, spoons, tooth picks, cash register tape, coffee stirrers, wooden spools, Unifix cubes, etc. etc. as some of their nonstandard units of measurement.

First Grade News Cont.

The children are really working hard at making predictions and recording accurate measurements. Continue to measure at home using rulers and some nonstandard units of measurement. The First Graders did an awesome job presenting The Solar System to the students at school and to their families with a power point slide show presentation. They spoke very well in front of an audience and their projects were quite creative. We have been learning a lot about the Scientific Method with our Scientist of the Week program. The experiments are terrific and thought provoking. The students are using the writing process when writing stories, poems, friendly letters, and plays. They are doing a good job planning, drafting, revising/editing, conferencing and publishing their various pieces of writing. Ask a first grader what time it is and you'll be impressed with how well they can tell time to the hour and half hour. The students are also using all five of their senses when observing the world around them. We are starting to observe the season of spring. Birds are chirping, the weather is getting a little warmer, flowers are starting to bloom!! This is an exciting time of the year!! Enjoy and observe the world around you!

Second Grade News

Spring is here and 2nd grade continues to be a lively place! Second graders completed a unit on penguins in which they created individual reports and power point presentations. All subject areas were incorporated into our penguin activities. We are very proud of the students' enthusiasm and motivation throughout all of these projects.



In Math we have been concentrating on money and time. 2nd graders, do you know how much 3 quarters, 1 dime and 6 pennies is worth? The children welcome you to challenge them in these areas. Science class has allowed the students to explore our balancing and weighing kits. Our next unit of study, in Science, will be butterflies which the students will encounter in May. Social Studies has allowed the 2nd graders to learn interesting facts about Wynantskill and our community helpers.

Thank you for being active members in your child's education!

Third Grade News

We have finished the Guided Reading assessments and you should be getting a form home with the results.

In ELA we continue to review and learn different parts of speech and contractions. We have written a variety of free verse and rhyming poems. We continue to work on the five stages of writing. Third graders work hard on their rough drafts and wrote their final copies of a variety of narratives. We continue to work on editing daily and will be copying an entry in their writing journal and adding details as well as edit mistakes from their pieces.

In social studies we just finished the verbal presentations of their China brochures. Everyone worked extremely hard on their brochure and each student had fun creating and designing them. Great job third grade! We will be moving to Australia soon.

Math class has been a whirr of multiplication facts! We are practicing our facts everyday and taking timed quizzes as well. We have already done our 0's, 1's, 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's, 10's, and 11's. We will work our way to 9's and then continue to practice them until the end of the year. Please practice these with your third grader! The better they get at these now the more successful your third grader will be in fourth grade. We will also be learning about division in April and May, as well as having some fun with probability and fractions.

Science class is finishing up their chemical tests and will be learning about pollination and plants by actually growing our own. We will be the insects and pollinate and then go through the entire plant life cycle, discussing certain ideas that pertain to it. We will also be foster parents to some eggs that will eventually hatch beautiful chicks. Mrs. Kelley was gracious enough to head our chick hatching unit and she has done it in the Kindergarten class already! Both classrooms enjoyed making posters for the hallway contest

Fourth Grade News

Fourth grade is so excited that spring has sprung!

Our scientists have been busy making working flashlights as a culminating activity to go along with our science kit! One group even decided to make a lantern! We are now beginning a unit on water! Do you know how many drops of water will fit on a penny? Ask a 4th grader for the answer and explanation!

In Math we are working on fractions and decimals. Can you turn $7\frac{1}{2}$ into an improper fraction? Which is larger - 0.202 or 0.215?

A time of huge change in our state's history is the current focus of fourth grade Social Studies. We are studying the American Revolution and how New York became a state. On May 7th

Four Grade News Cont.

both classes expect to go to the Albany Institute of History and Art.

Their new exhibit celebrates the 400th Anniversary of the Hudson River. Our thanks to the PTO for assisting us cover some of the cost of this field trip. It is being coordinated jointly by the Art Department (Mrs. Mitchell) and the fourth grade teachers.

During Spring Break we hope you enjoy your child and have a chance to read with them.

Fifth Grade News

5th Grade loves their new science kit. The students have been working in cooperative groups to learn all about the digestive process. For example, we made a replica of how long our digestive system is, as well as, passing a potato through to demonstrate how foods moves though our body. We have also been testing foods for sugar and starch to better understand how chemical digestion works. We will next be exploring how our Respiratory System works.

The children also enjoyed their guest speaker Rick Salarzo aka "Many Flags" spoke about various Iroquois traditions, ceremonies, and stories. Special thanks to Steve Durand in making this visit possible.

Spanish News

Hay miercoles!!

Noticias de la clase de Sra. Hancock

We are very busy in 8th grade Spanish!!!!

As you know in 8th grade we have the New York State Proficiency Exam. This year the written exam is scheduled on Monday, June 22, 2009 at 8:45 am. Success on this exam gives students language credit for high school. In addition speaking, is 30% of the exam. This is one on one conversation. While in class we use Spanish to communicate, I want to provide additional practice for the students. Beginning on Wednesday, April 22nd and every Wednesday until June 3rd, I will offer extra speaking practice after school from 3:30pm - 4:30pm. This will give kids a chance to sit down with me one on one and understand the process. We will cover this in class however, practice makes perfect and I know with practice our students can be successful.

The oral portion of the exam will be given to the students individually, on Thursday, June 4th and Friday, June 5th.

Art News

What an exciting month it has been in the art room! Our Middle School Fine Arts Festival was quite a success with record numbers of people attending. Some highlights of the show were our magical "floating face" made by Maria Mauriello and Courtney Avery, our Master's and Impressionist paintings made by our Art Elective class, and incredible drawings and paintings by our 6-8th grade students. Thanks to all of you who attended and your numerous compliments to our students!

Here is what we've been busy doing in the art room:

- Kindergarten finished their beautiful clay pots and are now working on some beaded necklaces.
- First Grade took home their clay dinosaurs and are now working on a little animal print-making
- Second Grade finished their clay penguins and are now working on totem poles
- Third Grade will be making Tropical clay birds and recently finished *amazing Aboriginal-style collage/paintings*
- Fourth Grade is finishing up their Henry Hudson dioramas. We look forward to our Social Studies/Art Field Trip next month at the Albany Institute.
- Fifth Grade is continuing to work on their sponge printed pioneer quilts to coordinate with their social studies class.
- Seventh Grade is beginning to work on clay-pot animal designs and they did an incredible job learning 1pt. perspective drawing.
- Eighth grade is beginning to draw some Escher inspired insect drawings. The next project will be favorite/classic car paintings.

Art Elective work will still be on display for the remainder of the month in the front display case and the music/art wing. Congrats to these students for their perseverance in getting their paintings and projects done in time for the Art Show, and working around the clock to create such wonderful masterpieces!

Music Department News

March was a busy month for our music students. We celebrated "Music In our Schools Month" with a performance by the Band and Chorus students at the concourse in Albany for our NYS Assembly and Legislative members, family and friends. March 27th was our 4th annual Arts Festival celebration at Gardner-Dickinson with another performance and beautiful art work that was displayed from our students in grades 6-8. Thank you to Mrs. Mitchell for her help in the success of another Arts Festival. Congratulations to our All-County Elemen-

Music Department News Cont.

tary Band and Chorus students for their participation the Rensselaer County Music Festival that was held at Schodack High School on March 26th and 28th. Band students included: Jessica Marsh - Flute, Jessica Elder - Clarinet, Lauren Elder - Alto saxophone, Anabella French - Trumpet, and, Owen Miller - Percussion. Chorus students included: Mia Doring, Jessica Marsh, Kaylnn Roy and Lauren Seebald.

On April 4th and 5th, students will be participating in the New York State School Music Association Solo and Ensemble Festival at Bethlehem Middle School. Sixteen of our music students will be performing solos and ensembles to receive a grade that is based on their performance, scales and sight reading ability. In March, Tessa Hickey performed a piano solo at St. Rose for the piano NYSSMA festival and she received a score of "excellent".

Our Spring concert is scheduled for May 13th for grades 6-8 and May 12th for grades k-4, both concerts begin at 7:00PM. We look forward to seeing all our parents and friends at the Spring concert!

Library Media Center News

Our recently held annual PTO Book Fair was another huge success! Students, parents, teachers, and staff loved the magical transformation of our school's Main Lobby into our very own bookstore! This year's theme of "Lights! Camera! Book Fair!" was especially fun. The library received three boxes filled with books which are currently being processed and added to the collection for everyone to enjoy. Mrs. Vickers would like to say a special thank you to Mrs. French and Mrs. Stoner, as well as to all the parents and grandparents who helped with this wonderful event.

Currently students are working on a wide variety of activities including: stock market, volcanoes, USA state posters, author/illustrator Thomas Locker (Hudson River celebrates 400th anniversary), Japan/Asia - and of course... April is National Poetry Month.

Thanks goes to Grade 2 Art Class students for the display in the library media center of their books, "If You Give a..." based on books by author Laura Joffe Numeroff. They are terrific!

Enjoy the new books from the Book Fair! Be sure to spend some extra time reading, especially on these "rainy" spring days!

"Happy Spring Reading" from,

Mrs. Vickers

Odyssey of the Mind News

The Gardner Dickinson School Odyssey of the Mind Teams competed in the Region 4 Tournament at Tamarac Middle and High School on Saturday March 7, 2009. Both teams were outstanding and performed their "solutions" creatively. The 5th and 6th grade team was awarded 4th place for Division 2 Problem 5. They did an excellent job with their skit about superstitions. The 7th and 8th grade team won **FIRST PLACE** for their efforts in Division 2 Problem 2! This team won a trophy for the school and each team member received a gold medal. The 7th and 8th grade team is now refining their "solution" to present at the state competition on Saturday April 4th at Binghamton University. Mrs. Carbone was presented with the OMER award for 10 years of service and dedication to the Odyssey of the Mind program. Look for pictures from the event on the school website soon. Congratulations to both teams on a job well done!

5th and 6th grade

Madison Akots

Jenna LeFevre

Alexus Kipling

Sarah Meemken

Elissa Kane

Anabella French

Abby Driscoll

Coach: Miss Adams

Coach: Miss Cronin

7th and 8th grade

Liisi Vink-Lainas

Michelle Lauletta

Lizzie Karam

Sal Elder

Brayleigh Hanlon

Christina Mamone

Kelse Merrill

Coach: Mrs. Carbone

Coach: Mrs. Keane

Builder's Club News

Builder's Club has been quite busy over the past few months. February brought the Valentine's Dance for the middle school students. The dance was a huge success thanks in part to our DJ - Cap Capello. The students really enjoyed his light and video show! Anyone who ordered pictures from the dance should receive them soon. We also played Bingo with the senior citizens from VanRensselear Manor. Both adults and students enjoy this evening. We just finished up our penny drive to help the NYS Leukemia Society and we are currently collecting books, games and snacks for a shelter for disabled veterans in Albany. March ended with a bake sale at the Arts Festival. Thank you to those that contributed baked goods. April brings the Hawaiian Luau for grades 3-5. There will be hula lessons, lei making and dancing to the sounds of our 8th grade DJ's. Admission is \$5.00 and includes pizza and a drink. All stu-

Builder's Club News Cont.

dents should have received a permission slip. See your homeroom teacher if you need another. Upcoming events include the Kiwanis Pancake breakfast on April 5th and the spring dance for the middle school on May 8. Thank you to all students and parents that support Builder's Club.

Yearbook News

Final orders for a yearbook will be accepted until April 10th. The cost is now \$35.

It is possible that a limited number of extra copies will be available for sale after the yearbook arrives but there is no guarantee any extra will even arrive. Don't miss out!

Last year's book was great, and this year's will be even better!

If you still would like to order you may send payment in an envelope to your child's teacher with their name, grade and number of yearbooks clearly marked on it. Checks may be made out to Gardner Dickinson Yearbook.

Health Office News

Attention: grade 5 parents - please submit your child's immunization record, with the required TDAP booster before the end of the school year, if possible. Then I can update the health record, assuring an easy transition to 6th grade with all the required paperwork completed.

Attention 6th and 7th grade parents- sports physicals for the 2009-2010 school year will be done in late May, early June. Information and health history forms will be distributed in early May. In order for the exam to be done at school, the forms must be returned by May 6th. ******if you chose to have your private health care provider do the exam, it must be dated within the year before the start of school in September. Both the completed physical exam form, and the health history forms must be returned for approval before a student can "try out", or participate in practices. It is especially important for those interested in fall sports (soccer, track, cross country) to submit all forms and have the physicals before the end of the school year, as practices usually begin as soon as we return in September.**

Grade 8- students who are interested in participating in fall sports in high school may have their sports physical done here at Gardner Dickinson, or by their own physician.

Health Office News Cont.

Those who want to have the physical here must also return a health history form to the health office by May 6th. The forms are available in the health office

Cafeteria News

Could it really be spring already? It was a long cold winter, but, as we head into nice weather and vacation, a couple of quick reminders. Please remind your child about the importance of signing up for lunch! Every morning each student is responsible to sign-up for whatever it is they may want for lunch. We have become very busy and with out the lunch "count" it is very hard to prepare enough items for everyone while maintaining a quality product. If your child does not care for the daily special we offer subs, sandwiches and salads everyday. That said, with spring vacation approaching the day before we leave for vacation and the first day back from vacation we are unable to offer subs, salads and sandwiches. Our GD Fast Break breakfast has become very popular with breakfast participation at its highest all week, as we head into warmer weather we will be trading the hot chocolate for a fruit smoothie. Also for spring we will be featuring more fresh fruit and locally grown produce into our daily menu. Lots of big things are happening in the cafeteria this spring, so try us out for breakfast or lunch and see the difference!

Any questions, comments or concerns

I'll be in the cafeteria! Jill

PTO News

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

PTO would like to thank all who participated in Jump Rope for Heart. We raised over \$2700 for the American Heart Association. Way to go!!

We also would like to thank Tina Turbiasz for doing an amazing job with the bowling events. Everyone had a wonderful time.

PTO would also like to thank Michele French and Eve Stoner on the great job they did on the book fair. The excitement level was at an all time high with the Lights, Camera, and Action Theme. Great job!

Marilyn Halpin introduced the delicious Krause's fundraiser. Thanks Marilyn we loved it.

Please come and join us at our meetings we value your ideas and opinions. Join us for one or all of our next few meetings which will be on April 7th, May 12th, and June 9th at 7PM in the Media Center. Hope to see you then.