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# Backpack Express

## Dates for December

December 1, 2011	Winter Concert Grades 6th—8th	7:30pm
December 2, 2011	Builder's Club Winter Dance	7:00pm—10:00pm
December 7—9 2011	PTO Holiday Shop	All Day
December 8, 2011	Winter Concert	7:00pm
December 12, 2011	Boys Basketball at CBA	6:45pm
December 15, 2011	Girls and Boys Basketball Game Home against Hackett Middle School	4:15pm
	Board of Education Meeting	7:00pm
December 16, 2011	Progress Reports Mailed Home	
December 19, 2011	Girls and Boys Basketball Game Home against North Albany Academy	4:15pm
December 26, 2011— January 2, 2012	Holiday Recess	<b>NO SCHOOL</b>

## Principal's Message

The first semester ends on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2012 and report cards should be home by February 2<sup>nd</sup>. If you have any questions regarding your child's academic program please contact the Teacher or Guidance Counselor.

Please note that all snow closings where students are dismissed early 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. Parents as well as emergency contacts (as you have designated) will receive an automated phone call stating that students are being transported to their emergency contact at a specific dismissal time.

All bus notes or pre-arrangements that have been set up for the dismissal of your child on that day will be disregarded and your child will be dismissed and transported to the emergency contact you have listed. If you have any questions about your emergency contact des-

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## Principal's News Continued

ignations or the emergency dismissal procedures please contact me.

For those parents that have preschool age children that will be 5 years old by December 1<sup>st</sup> of 2012, it is time to register your child for Kindergarten. Please contact Mrs. McKenna at 283 4600 ext. 10 to begin the registration process.

I thank you for your continued cooperation and support.

### Kindergarten News

Kindergarten has had a busy fall and your children are working really hard in many areas. We are pleased with how well they are sharing and being kind to each other.

The children are working hard on our first Science kit. Your child may be talking about the different lessons: objects that sink or float, magnets, and their experiences sifting sand and beans. Soon we'll be doing a section on "garbage dumps".

In Math we have been working on shapes in the world around us, patterns, more and less, counting and number formation. Please use everyday situations to show how Math is used in real life.

We continue to work hard with our writing development. Our first and last names are looking SPECTACULAR!! Please continue to encourage writing everyday at home, whether playing restaurant, vet hospital, making lists...etc.

Guided Reading groups have begun!!! The kids are off to an amazing start! If your child has a bag with a book in it, please listen to your child read it 3 times...making sure they are pointing to the words and using the pictures as clues, and return it to school the next day.

Have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season! Your Kindergarten Team

### First Grade News

First grade has had a very busy fall. We have been comparing and measuring things around the school during our science lessons. In math we have mastered addition and started subtraction! Ask a first grader about scooping! Our Harvest Festival was a huge success, thanks to our wonderful parent helpers. First grade continues to read and write vigorously! We are excited for the snow to fall and winter to begin; we are looking forward to studying the changes in weather. December is a very busy month in first grade!

### Second Grade News

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade enjoyed their field trip in November to the Children's Museum to learn more about life cycles and interact with the animals. We have completed our Balancing and Weighing Science Kits and are now starting our Maps and Globes unit in Social Studies.

## Second Grade News Continued

Our reading centers continue to foster independence. Seasonal literature has been prevalent throughout 2nd Grade. Students are enjoying our guided reading books as they are tailored to their individual reading level.

Throughout January and February, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders will be learning about penguins and their habitat. Center based activities will be focused on this theme. This unit will culminate with the students creating a written and oral report as well as a power point presentation.

We would like to thank all of the parents for their support and donations throughout the holiday season!

## Third Grade News

Third Grade is moving right along! We have just started our unit on graphs in math and last week we finished up our unit on time and money. Students continue to learn more of their multiplication facts. Don't forget to keep practicing the 5's because the 10's are next! In writing, we have been and are learning about literary nonfiction. There are many interesting topics we are becoming and want to be experts in. In reading, students continue to work on many comprehension skills in whole group as well as their guided reading groups. In Social Studies we have been learning about China and its people. We would also like to congratulate Ms. Glaz's class on winning the pizza party for being one of the classes with the most participation in the P.T.O membership drive. Lastly, it was so nice meeting with all of you at our Parent/Teacher Conferences in November, thank you all for coming.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have been working hard in health this year. Not only are they learning terminology and concepts, but they have been practicing them as well. The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are empowering themselves to live a happy, healthy life.

Activities already completed this year are "Balance in Life" collage triangles, worry/anxiety management lessons/stories, relaxation breathing and imagery, yoga, germs, and the proper way to wash your hands!. Up next; teeth!

## Fourth Grade News

Fourth grade has been very busy and working hard! In science we have created question and answer boards that they shared with other classes. Students from other classes used a circuit tester to try and match up the questions and answers. If they matched the Q and A correctly, the light bulb lit up! We are also creating flashlights with working switches! In Social Studies we are learning about the Algonquians and Iroquois.

## Fourth Grade News Continued

(Ask a fourth grader what SCOOM stands for.)

Do you want to learn more about soccer, Aruba, Legos, The Hunger Games, snowboarding, or The DSi? How about cheerleading, Pokemon or archery? Be sure to check out our latest writing pieces that inform you on these and many other topics. You will be amazed as you view our brochures, pamphlets and stories! As we read *Holes* by Louis Sacher and other great stories, we are learning to read like writers! We are noticing things that great authors use. Things we have noticed include: repetition, short or long sentences, one word sentences and alliterations. We will work on putting these into our own writing! Have a great holiday season and Happy New Year!

## Fifth Grade News

Fifth grade scientists made water-cycle posters and continue to work on observing their stream tables to see the effects that water has on the land. Furthermore, our time travelers are starting a project on what North America was like prior to the "discovery" by Columbus. Also, our mathematicians have worked hard on whole number and decimal computations, and will now be working with expressions, equations, and fractions. In addition, our authors are working on finishing their expository essays and will be publishing before the end of the year. Finally, all of our students continue to enjoy their DEAR, partner, and group reading opportunities.

## Sixth Grade News

Sixth grade has been quite busy since September. In ELA we've completed reading a couple of books as a class, and we're now on to independent reading. We worked on writing personal narratives in lab—which were quite delightful to read, by the way! Next we'll be working on persuasive essays.

In math we're conquering fractions. We've figured out how to add, subtract, multiply, and simplify them, so we're moving on to division. We are quite the "mathletes"!

The next few weeks can be extremely busy. I hope you get the opportunity to sit and drink in a little time with your family. Have a safe and happy holiday season. I wish you all the best.

## Art Room News

The students have been very busy with so many amazing projects lately. **Kindergarten** just began working on an art/library collaborative project after viewing the incredible illustrations of Lois Ehlert. **First Grade**- has been experimenting with various "textures" and textures found in the art room and in nature. **Second Grade**- is currently working on a pattern design project that will be folded into an interesting fan-like shape. **Third Grade**- recently finished their Patricia Polacco inspired drawings to soon be on display this month at the North Greenbush Public library, and now are working on a Martin Luther King inspired drawing contest/showcase. **Fourth Grade**- is presently drawing a realistic picture inspired by a fall still life set up in the art room. The children are paying close attention to details and textures as they carefully observe and draw what they see. **Fifth Grade**- is presently working on multi-cultural masks inspired from masks from around the world. The children began constructing the framework out of rolled up newspaper and tape and will begin paper mache overlays this week. Five of our fifth grade students also had their "internet safety" posters selected to go on for competition!!!

**Sixth Grade**- recently finished up a figure drawing lesson. The children had so much fun posing for each other!!! We are now working in groups to make plaster bandage mummies. The students are very enthusiastic about their creations already.

**Seventh Grade**- the students just did an absolutely incredible job on their vintage inspired album covers. The projects turned out so well, that they will be on display in the March art show. The students are now working on their very own Picasso renditions.

**Accelerated Art**- The students recently wrapped up a fall still life oil pastel/chalk drawing. The results were amazing and will be on display shortly!! They are now working on the annual holiday concert artwork for Mrs. Newell. The students are honored to be included in such a production.

Thanks so much for your continued support of the art program!!!

## Library News

Warm greetings from the Library Media Center! This is shaping up to be a great winter as our classes learn there is "**Snow Better Time to Read!**"

**Kindergarten** is doing a fantastic job with their first author study. We're learning all about **Lois Ehlert** and how she makes her beautiful books. We'll be making our own books to take home inspired by Lois' art in *Red Leaf*, *Yellow Leaf*, and best of all, the kids will be making a really cool aquarium of gorgeous watercolor fish with Jeanine Mitchell in art class based on Lois' book, *Fish Eyes*.

## Library News Continued

**First grade** wrapped up a fun unit all about **Marc Brown**, best known for his Arthur books. We read many of his books, including several that were *not* about Arthur, and we learned so much about him as an author and an illustrator. We ended our unit by reading a "Book O' Mystery", which happened to be illustrated by Marc Brown. Lastly, we wrote him a letter and sent him our autographs and a photograph of our whole class holding some of our favorite Marc Brown books. You can see the picture on my gallery on my classroom page. We're hoping we hear back from him soon!

**Second grade** will be studying **Tomie dePaola** in December, best known for his books about the wise and kind Italian witch, Strega Nona. After we watch a movie about his life/art, we will read several of his award winning books (both fiction and nonfiction) and will look for his trademark hearts hidden in lots of his illustrations.

**Third grade** is doing a great job transitioning into a more academically focused literacy curriculum. We've already covered book selection techniques (including the 5-finger rule), author names, fiction call numbers, our on-line catalog, and parts of books - phew!! Next we'll tackle our long unit on **398.2** where the students will learn all about folk tales, fairy tales, and tall tales from all around the world.

**Fourth grade** has had a busy Fall with a series of units including mapping our Library, mastering our on-line catalog and reviewing the parts of books. Next we plunge into **literary terms** followed by a unit on **genres**. They're doing a great job!

**Fifth grade** just finished learning all about our online databases and various internet resources. Next we will review both fiction and nonfiction call numbers followed by a detailed unit on **bibliography**. There is so much to learn before middle school!

Finally, I'd again like to encourage you to take advantage of our new **e-book** collection. You can access our titles through our online catalog by typing "ebk" into the search box (gds.ind.opalsinfo.net). Also, **Middle School** has access to many more e-books through **Over-Drive** provided courtesy of Questar. They must see me or their classroom teacher for their specific user id and password, so if you're interested, let us know! It'd be a great way to use those Kindles and Nooks Santa may be planning to bring.

And as always, happy reading - and happy holidays!

## Physical Education News

We spent the month of November playing basketball and working on ball handling skills. Students played games such as knock out, star, horse, and around the world as well as full court games. Students worked hard to perfect their shooting by using the "BEEF" technique which stands for Base, Eyes, Elbow, Follow-thru. We also spent time working on correct form for

## Physical Education News Continued

layups using both hands as well as dribbling skills using our fingertips and keeping our heads up and ball below our waists. Students had a great time learning and playing the games. Our modified basketball teams are also now in full swing thanks to our coaches Mr. Randall, Mr. Kahler, Mr. DeBenedeti, and Mrs. Miller. Our next unit will be hockey.

## Health Office News

As a reminder, when students are ill or showing signs of impending illness, (fever in the "99's", overtired, pale, "out of sorts") please keep them home. Anyone with a fever over 100 needs to stay home for 24 hrs after the fever has subsided without the use of medication.

LOST AND FOUND is now located in the hallway outside the gymnasium. Please remind your child to check it when items are missing, or stop by if you're at school for evening activities. There are several new looking items that haven't been claimed, and with the colder weather here, there are bound to be more.

We now have plenty of donations for clothing changes. Thank you for your contributions. The only thing we are in need of is Gr K - Gr1 size jogging pants. The elastic waist makes them more usable for different size ranges.

Have a very Happy and Safe Holiday Season!

## Odyssey of the Mind News

Creativity is in the air at Gardner Dickinson! There was a tremendous interest in the Odyssey of the Mind program this year which resulted in the creation of 4 teams. The students have been busy meeting after school to prepare an 8 minute presentation that solves the problem that their team has chosen. The Region 4 competition will be held at Rensselaer High School on Saturday March 10, 2012.

### **Grade 5 Odyssey of the Mind Team**

**Coaches: Miss Cronin & Miss Griffin**

Christina P.

Brooklyn D.

Amaya G.

Olivia M.

Courtney M.

Rachel K.

Abbie H.

# Odyssey of the Mind News Continued

## Middle School Odyssey of the Mind Team

Coaches: Miss Adams & Mr. Mesh

Jenna L.	Brittany K.
Olivia C.	Hannah A.
Natalie S.	Serafina F.
Isabella C.	

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## Middle School Odyssey of the Mind Team

Coach: Mrs. Keane

Madison A.	Rebecca L.
Jessi D.	Paige N.
Keara K.	Isabella F.
Michael L.	

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## Middle School Odyssey of the Mind Team

Coach: Mrs. Carbone

Lauren N.	Tori G.
Jessica V.	Kaylie W.
Jack R.	Averi P.
Raymond H.	

## PTO News

The NEW APPAREL IS HERE!!! You can place your orders by Friday December 2<sup>nd</sup> in time for Christmas Delivery!!! All the apparel is being displayed in the main lobby. There is everything from T's, and long sleeve T's available in blue, black or white. Sweat shirts, and Hoodies are available in blue or black. Fleece available in black, ski cap, baseball hats and even an umbrella! All terrific quality!! Thank you to Sue Czubek and the Apparel Team for all they're hard work!!! It looks GREAT!! Order forms available on [www.wynantskillufsd.org](http://www.wynantskillufsd.org)

The Talent Show planning is underway...Talent Show auditions will be held on **November 30<sup>th</sup>** and rehearsals **January 25<sup>th</sup>** , show on **January 27<sup>th</sup>**. Only those who attend the auditions (no one will be cut this will be for appropriateness) will be allowed to perform.

## PTO News Continued

Thank you Michelle LaVoy and her Talent Team for all they're hard work putting it all together!! For questions contact Michelle LaVoy at [mplavoy2@yahoo.com](mailto:mplavoy2@yahoo.com)  
School Banking has begun with CAP COM. Did you know your child can earn a free \$70 each year to their account, just for report cards and reading? Students can bring in their deposits every Wednesday (in room 237 from 8:00 to 8:30) directly to school in any denomination, nothing too small or too big to start banking. It's not too late to sign up; just contact Sue Czubek at [sczubek@yahoo.com](mailto:sczubek@yahoo.com).

The Holiday Shop will be open December 7<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> for your children to get all they're holiday shopping done in one place and without you taking them through the crowds. Gifts are \$1-\$5. Thank you to Tina Turbiaz for all your help with shopping with me. PTO would like to thank Michelle French and Sue Czubek for another terrific Fall Book Fair. Thank you to Barbara Cupp, Kate Kaczala, and Jen Hallenbeck for Kindergarten family night, they had a great turnout for the family fun event! Thank you to Aggie Casale and all her volunteers for Picture Day. Make-up date is December 1, 2011. Thank you to Michelle Fanning for Family Movie Night and another great PTO Night out! Thank you to Mary Lou LeFevre for getting all the Yankee Candle orders together and delivered in time for Thanksgiving!! Last but not least Sue Czubek and the Apparel Team for getting out all our new exciting apparel!

Please join us at our next PTO meeting on Tuesday November 29<sup>th</sup>. We value your ideas and your opinions, hope to see you there.

Thank you to all our great Parents and Teachers who give their time to help with all our events!! Please contact me at anytime for anything at [gardenbunny28@aol.com](mailto:gardenbunny28@aol.com) or you may call me at 283-6421.

