

THE BRAGGIN DRAGON

DECEMBER, 2009/JANUARY, 2010

PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

I PROMISE!

Think back to December, 2008. As usual our family is gathered around the dinner table. Tonight our discussion was to develop "promises" for the year 2009. Promises are our goals for the future, in this case next year. Everyone had a chance to bring forth what additional responsibilities were to be undertaken in the New Year. Think back, how many of these promises were followed up by action plans to successfully implement our goals. As a parent was I going to become more involved in my child's school work? Was I more closely monitoring my child's homework each night? Did I keep in close contact with my child's teacher? Was my child fulfilling his/her promises for the coming year? These are important questions to be thought about as we embark in the year 2010. Promises are just promises. How we effectively implement these promises are of the utmost importance. Everyone in the family must have thoughts as to how they would improve themselves. As far as our children are concerned, they must seek to refine their work/study skills. In particular, they must work out with you a time frame for completing school related activities after school, every evening. It need not be a minute by minute plan, but one that will allow your child to carefully complete all assignments allowing time for leisure reading. One of your promises to be fulfilled is the daily review of the papers sent home by the teacher in your child's book bag. Children often place school papers, school announcements, PTO news, etc in this bag and sometimes do not show them to you when they get home. Parents call the school or write to the teacher about information that can probably be found in the book bag. Our monthly newsletter contains pertinent happenings during the upcoming month. So as we enter the year 2010 it is important that members of the family

exchange promises for the upcoming year. As we develop plans, we must make sure that we are periodically evaluating our action goals. Remember, promises are just promises. What we didn't accomplish in 2009 we might continue to pursue in 2010. Remember to prioritize your goals, make sure they are attainable. Discuss these promises periodically at the dinner table. Every child should have on their list: 1) Put 100% effort in their school work. 2) Be responsible members of the family. 3) Be more caring. 4) Do more reading and writing at home. 5) During the "school week" limit time playing video games. 6) Get at least 9 hours of sleep. 7) You add the rest. HAVE A PRODUCTIVE NEW YEAR, 2010.

BITS & PIECES

- 1) Report cards go home for students in grades 2-5 on December 1.
- 2) The PTO will have a special "Movie Night" on Friday evening, December 11, more to follow.
- 3) Our John Marshall Music Club will visit the Hartwyck Brain Injury Center in Edison to sing holiday songs with the residents on December 17.
- 4) The Edison High School Chorus will be here to present their holiday program on Friday, December 18.
- 5) Winter officially begins on Monday, December 21. Do you have your snow shovels ready?
- 6) We will have our annual holiday assembly on Monday, December 21.
- 7) Our holiday parties will be held on Wednesday, December 23.
- 8) Our school will be closed from December 24 to Monday, January 4 for winter recess. Have a relaxing, fun filled vacation.

- 9) Students, please plan your vacation leisure reading activities. We will be off for 10 days, read daily.
- 10) Progress reports for marking period #2 go home on January 4th.
- 11) We will have a speaker come to our school on January 11 to talk to the children on bullying.
- 12) School will be closed on January 18 for Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.
- 13) School will close at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 19 for teacher workshops.
- 14) Our PTO will have a Family Bing Night on Thursday, January 21st.
- 15) Our second marking period ends on Friday, January 29th for grades K-5.
- 16) Please read our message in this newsletter re: inclement weather communications.
- 17) Have you, as a family, prepared your resolutions for the year 2010?
- 18) Congratulations to Kristina Rodriguez for placing second in an ice skating tournament in Delaware.
- 19) Our next John Marshall School University meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 26th at 9:30 a.m., more later.
- 20) Continue to support our PTO and their numerous Family Nights.
- 21) Advise your children about walking, bicycling, playing after 5:00 p.m. outdoors since it is already dark.
- 22) Let's all eat healthier this year, 2010. More fruits and vegetables, please!
- 23) Are you following up on your meeting with the teachers in November? Suggestions were presented by the teacher to improve your child's school work. Educating your child is a team effort.
- 24) Remind your child (and yourself) when riding in a car or school bus.
- 25) Please Read our newsletter in its entirety and also check our website where the newsletter may be viewed at **EDISONPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG** click on "SCHOOLS"
- 26) Congratulations to Praveen Balakrishnan who placed 1st in the New Jersey Chess tournament. He is ranked 6th in the U.S.A.

EATING HEALTHFUL FOODS

At our recent meeting of our student lunch committee, the school lunch menu was again examined. I asked the

supervisor of the food service to comment. He indicated that there are strict guidelines in the development of the student lunches. There is a balance of healthful foods. However, the problem arises when the children take their tray back to the table. A quantity of the nutritious foods is discarded in the garbage pail namely fruits and vegetables. Does this happen at home? Are you controlling the amount of fats and sweets being consumed by your child in between meals? Studies have shown that children and adults consume too many unhealthy snacks. Whereas we should be eating a bag of carrots, we are eating a bag of chips. While we should be eating low calorie sweet candy, we are consuming ice cream, candy and cake high in sugar and fat. We all know the problems associated with diabetes and high cholesterol, it begins in many cases in childhood. Please monitor your child's snacks.

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2010 - 2011

I can see us continuing to focus on the 13 areas we sought to improve and refine upon in 2009. We do have a problem which has become quite apparent. We had the largest kindergarten class registered in September, 2009. We have five sections of students with near capacity enrollments. We also have the last small fifth grade class which means we are going to be above capacity with close to 600 students. Fortunately we had the addition to our building. Presently, all rooms are occupied. I want to have all our children, grades K-5 eating in the cafeteria. I will keep everyone informed as we wrestle with this problem in the school year 2010-2011. If the bond issue passes in January, it may solve some enrollment problems in the elementary schools throughout our district. Academically, we might focus on student writing skills like reading, writing skills which can only improve by practice. Teachers are providing a wide variety of activities in school. Our children must get away from the television and spend more time reading and writing. As I have said on numerous occasions, the more children practice their academic skills, the more proficient they become. We need your support. The goal set by the national education department for every child is to be proficient in reading, writing and mathematics.

HOW DID OUR 2009 PROMISES FARE

- 1) Student performance in reading comprehension has improved.
- 2) Student effort in writing must continue to be worked on.

- 3) We have 20 children who had perfect scores of 300 on the NJASK tests in grades 3, 4, and 5. Students must continue to practice doing mathematics, word problems, geometry and measuring.
- 4) We are the first school in the elementary level to have a functioning computer lab. Classes are scheduled weekly for grades 1-5.
- 5) We have new playground equipment thanks to the effort of our PTO.
- 6) We have expanded our parking facilities to accommodate more cars and allow for a student drop off point on the side of the building.
- 7) Classes are scheduled after school for students needing additional reading help.
- 8) We have a great READ 180 Program for fourth and fifth grades needing small group Language Arts instruction.
- 9) We have periodic parent-education meetings at the school (John Marshall University) focusing on curriculum issues attended by 30+ parents.
- 10) Our PTO continued to work diligently to provide assemblies for our children.
- 11) We continue to be a model elementary school in Edison.
- 12) Our Family Nights were well attended.
- 13) Our children displayed excellent character skills. Our school is rated A+ regarding our interpersonal relationship attitudes - caring, respectful, responsible, kind, friendly and trustworthy. Visitors openly comment about our students, especially how they relate to one another.

INCLEMENT WEATHER REMINDERS

We are approaching the winter season which means cold, icy and snowy weather. The school calendar allows for two extra days in case school cannot be open or if there is a delayed opening (10:30 a.m.). You will be able to find this out through the following media when this happens:
Radio stations 1450 A.M., 98.3 F.M., 101.5 F.M.
Television channels 12 or Edison channel 118.

If there is an early closing; you will receive an automated **CONNECT ED** call from the school advising you of school closings. **On the delayed opening days there will be latchkey AFTER SCHOOL ONLY. THERE IS NO LATCHKEY IN THE MORNING ON DELAYED OPENINGS.** Lunch will be served on delayed opening and early dismissal days. Remember, it is your responsibility to provide supervision for your children when school is

not open. It is imperative that you have a plan in place. On delayed opening days you cannot bring your child to school before 10:15 a.m. Bus pickup time will be around 10:00 a.m. On early dismissal days your child's bus will arrive after 1:30, if the road conditions are poor, the bus will take longer to arrive home. **DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL REGARDING CLOSINGS, EARLY DISMISSALS AND DELAYED OPENINGS.**

KINDERGARTEN NEWS

This month was a very busy time for all our Kindergarten classes. We enjoyed a visit from the head librarian "Miss Dolores" from the Edison Public Library. She read several stories and shared her many puppets with us. We also enjoyed our annual Pumpkin Patch visit right here at John Marshall School. Everyone got a chance to find their own pumpkin. It was so much fun decorating our pumpkins to take home. We can hardly wait to celebrate our Thanksgiving feast. All kindergarten classes will gather together to sing songs and enjoy a special Thanksgiving treat. Hope everyone enjoys a very happy and peaceful holiday.

FIRST GRADE NEWS

The first grade teachers would like to thank all of the parents for attending conferences. Your child is important to us and we want you to know about the successes as well as the areas that may need assistance.

The weather is getting colder. Please dress your child appropriately. All coats, scarves, mittens/gloves, and hats should be labeled. If your child loses an item, we have a lost and found located in our nurse's office.

Please continue to read every day with your child. Take advantage of the wonderful selections from the Scholastic Book order for the "just right" book for your child. Turn off the television and video games and enjoy a conversation with your child about their favorite story. It is also important to read all of the directions on the homework each night, practice sight words, and practice math facts whenever possible.

The first grade teachers wish the best to all of our families for a fun, safe, and healthy winter break. See you next year!

FROM SECOND GRADE

The winter season will be very busy for the Second Grades. We will be reading and writing about so many interesting non-fiction topics. We are excited about doing research and putting together our own books of facts. We also will really enjoy using AlphaSmarts and the computer to publish our work. Miss Nebenhaus and Ms. Riggs' classes will be doing a Flat Stanley letter writing project. Maybe you will be lucky enough to receive someone's Flat self.

Along with this we will begin our study of Penguins in Science. This will also be a great research topic both in and outside of school. We are looking forward to acting out some of the penguins' behaviors and being involved with some hands on activities that demonstrate how a penguin stays warm, fishes for food, and cares for its egg.

A dogsled race? We haven't even had any snow yet, but some of the Second Grades will be reading a biography of Susan Butcher and the Iditarod Race in Alaska along with other biographies of interesting people. The Iditarod Race is a two week dogsled race that will start on March 2nd this year. We can't wait to see who wins the race this year. We can all check it out on the website www.iditarod.com. Speaking of biographies, some classes are writing biographies of classmates. It will be so much fun brainstorming interesting questions and interviewing each other. We will learn a lot about our peers!

We also would like to thank all of the families who participated in the Caring Collection. The Second Grades collected much needed food for families in need.

THIRD GRADE NEWS

Season's Greetings! We hope that this newsletter finds you all enjoying a warm, cozy season. 3rd graders are continuing to shine! We want to say a big "thank you" to all those families who donated food for our annual Thanksgiving food drive. We are delighted with the overwhelming response of great citizenship that our third graders are demonstrating this year. We hope to continue to show our third grade spirit throughout the remainder of this school year.

Miss Peters' class has been studying Unit A in Science where we had some visitors that we were able to observe in a model habitat and finally bring them back to nature. We also explored classifying animals by looking at their individual characteristics. If you visit our

classroom this winter, you may see our "Shoebox Habitats". These dioramas were created by the students after choosing an animal to research and crafting a habitat to show where their chosen animal lives.

Third grade Writers have been busy choosing seeds and sharing their stories in class. Our writing time has become a special time in our day that students look forward to. We are moving away from "summarizing" and starting to become "story tellers" by SHOWING our stories with words and not just TELLING.

We hope that everyone has had an opportunity to take some trips to "Study Island". This voyage will take your children through activities to reinforce learned skills and put those skills to use while allowing them more exposure to the format they will see on the NJASK this May. Take time to enjoy this journey for 15 minutes, a couple of days per week. Grab your sunglasses, grab your blanket, and pack a bag! It's Study Island or Bust!

Please continue to support the student council "dress up days". It's so wonderful to see our students showing their John Marshall spirit! Have a warm, happy, healthy, holiday season! Remember to "warm up with a great book!" Happy Holidays to all and a Wonderful New Year!

FROM GRADE FOUR

The fourth graders have been working very hard! We are doing a great job in our personal narrative writing and we have seen a dramatic improvement since September. In math we are starting the chapter on Time, Data and Graphs, and will soon be preparing for the NJASK test. In Science we have mealworms in our classrooms that we are observing and we are guessing what they are going to turn into. We are also learning about the human body and how it works. Remember to leisurely read at home it is a great way to read for enjoyment as well as become a better reader. Study Island is a great resource to practice Math and Language Arts and prepare for testing. Hope you have a great Thanksgiving and remember what we are all thankful for.

FROM FIFTH GRADE

Happy Holidays! We have a lot of celebrating in 5th grade! During the month of December, we will be learning about the many holidays celebrated by our students. We're also going to work on poetry; winter is the season to use descriptive writing skills. We will be working on Earth Systems in Science and studying the American Revolution in Social Studies. Math is a fun area of study this month; we will be concentrating on division and

coordinates. Remember to keep practicing your multiplication facts!

PHYSICAL EDUCATION NEWS

Now that the weather has cooled Mr. Gerba's classes will complete the indoor presidential fitness tests. Push-ups, sit-ups, sit-n-reach and shuttle run are excellent ways to measure a student's speed, flexibility and strength. In wellness, students will learn to eat foods of different colors by bringing in pictures of different colored foods to stick on Mr. G's colored rainbow. These colors all have different nutritional values that will be discussed.

Mr. Yannazzo's physical education classes are finishing their fall season with a soccer unit. Since the weather has changed we have moved the final activities inside.

Primary grades will be playing soccer bowling, where they will utilize their dribbling, trapping, and passing accuracy.

Grades 3-5 will incorporate their more advanced skills of shooting, tackling, and position strategy into intense games of ultimate sideline soccer.

In wellness, Mr. Yannazzo's classes are learning how to organize everyday foods into three easy categories.

1) "Go" foods should make up a majority of our diet. Examples of some of the "Go" foods are: fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, flax seed, low fat cheese, 1% milk, chicken, and turkey.

2) "Whoa" foods must be used in moderation because of high contents of fat, saturated fats, and salt. This includes red meats, fried foods, processed luncheon meats, canned soups, and creamed based sauces.

3) "No" foods such as cake, donuts, cookies, candy, and salty snacks should only be consumed on special occasions.

Following the above categories along with adding exercise, the proper amount of sleep, and plenty of water will contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

FROM OUR NURSE

I hope by now you have all received the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine that was offered four different times in the Edison area. I want to remind all

our parents and students that hand washing is the #one way to prevent the spread of infection. Winter is

rapidly approaching, so dress your children warm. Gloves are just as important as a hat and warm coat. With the holiday's approaching, there are many different holiday foods being served by family and friends. To prevent you from getting food poisoning, do not leave cooked food out of your refrigerator for hours. Chicken, food made with eggs, and foods prepared with mayonnaise are the foods we have to watch out for. Whatever your holiday, I hope you all have a safe a peaceful holiday season.

With the onset of winter, flu season is upon us. Flu spreads rapidly through the home and school if precautions aren't taken by parents. If your child has a fever, coughing, throwing up or other similar symptoms, please keep her/him home. Make sure that everyone washes their hands frequently. Keep door knobs clean. Stay home and rest. Even though your child may miss a day or two from school, it is well worth it. Not only can they spread the germ at school but they could become very ill. It only takes one child in a class to spread the flu to the entire class. See a doctor if your child's condition worsens. Let's all stay healthy this flu season.

ART NEWS FROM MRS. HECK

'Tis the season...to be more artistic! Our busy students are working on an array of projects. Gingerbread cookies, winter houses and snowmen will be a main focus of our first graders. Our second graders just finished their winter pointillism projects and are working hard on their nutcrackers. Third graders love snow globes, so we will use collage techniques to create those. Fourth grade just completed their snowflake designs and will soon start learning about geometry in art. And our fifth grade birch trees look wonderful! what a great job everyone did!

Going anywhere over winter break?? How about a trip to the MOMA(modern museum of art) in New York City. Not only is it a great time of year to see the lights of the city but the MOMA is having a Tim Burton art exhibition from now through the spring! The kids will surely recognize some of his creations from their favorite movies! Here is the web site for more info..MoMA.org.

ART CLUB NEWS

Our pinch pots look great and most will remain on display in our school library through the month of December. Some of the artwork we produced will be in an art display located at the Board of Education office. We are so excited to be among the first schools in Edison to show off our talented students here!!

COUNSELOR CORNER

During November and December we have been working on the Character Education trait of **responsibility**. Our peer mediators have started their lessons in conflict resolution. First graders have completed GROARK lessons and have moved on to Popcorn Park which continues our Character Education Program. Parent-Teacher conferences have come and gone, it seemed that many parents attended and hopefully you were able to get a better sense of how your child is doing in class. I was pleased to meet many new parents. I am available if you have any concerns about how your child is progressing. Have a happy and healthy holiday season.

ESL NEWS

It's been an exciting school year so far and the students in ESL are looking forward to the winter season. Some students will see snow for the first time! During the months of December and January, ESL students will learn about holidays celebrated by many different cultures. Students will enjoy reading books, playing games, and tasting foods from the different cultures. We will also explore the similarities and differences between the different holidays and make a diagram of our findings. Let's keep up the good work!

COMMUNICATIONS CORNER

Shanda Edwards, Speech Language Specialist
Alamnia Rodriguez, Speech Language Specialist

It's becoming a busy and fun time of the year. There are holidays, celebrations and lots of days to gather together around the table to eat and chat. You can even use your vacation preparation and/or travel time to encourage language growth. You will be creating a time to

share and learn. That's a win-win for you and your children.

Choose activities that your child will find interesting. Also try to choose some activities that explore other cultures. This will help your child to appreciate our differences as well as broaden their general knowledge base. After social activities, be sure to ask open ended questions.

Examples:

Can you describe your favorite part of this activity?

If you had to convince your friend that this was a great activity, what would you say?

What is something else that you would want to know about this activity?

What could be added to make this activity even better?

This type of communication exchange will help improve your child's skills with describing a remote event, improve vocabulary, improve reasoning and problem solving skills, and also increase their creative thinking skills. Wow! The best part is that they will just think that they are having fun.

Enjoy!

PTO NEWS

Thanks to the efforts of Donna Quinn (mother of Brianna Quinn!), Kimber Petroleum Corporation at 251 New Brunswick Ave., Fords, NJ 08863, John Marshall has been awarded a \$750 ExxonMobil Educational Alliance grant for The Earth Dome, Mobile Ed Products and Bananas, Blue Sky Puppets. The money will be used to subsidize these programs so that we can bring sections of Science to life for our students. Funded by the ExxonMobil Corporation, the ExxonMobil Alliance program is designed to provide Exxon retailers like Kimber Petroleum Corporation with an opportunity to invest in the future of their communities through educational grants to neighborhood schools.

MUSIC CLUB

Our club is preparing for concerts in December. On December 17 we will travel to Hartwyck on Oak Tree Road in Edison to perform for the residents. On Monday, December 21, we will be part of the entire fifth grade chorus to have a Sing-A-Long with the entire school.