

Parkers Prairie Elementary Newsletter

October 2009



PRIDE

Are your children beginning to talk about Panther PRIDE?

PRIDE is an acronym that we developed last spring with input from students and building staff.

P = Practice Kindness

R = Respect Everyone

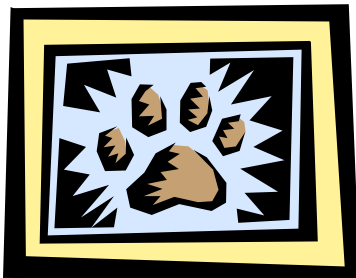
I = Include Others

D = Demonstrate Self Control

E = Everyone Be Responsible

Mr. Noga has been providing some great leadership to staff and the students in getting the PRIDE message out. He has been targeting key areas in the building and teaching PRIDE-full behaviors. He has worked with students in the cafeteria and on recess equipment. Our focus will be on teaching the desired behaviors.

There are also posters in the building, created by students, with reminders about PRIDE. And, classroom teachers are talking with students about PRIDE.



Handbook Highlight

Our elementary handbook can be accessed on our district website. www.isd547.com A reminder that we did not print paper copies of our handbook for all families this year. If you would like a paper copy please notify the office and we will get you one.

Two locations in our building have different hours of operation. First the elementary office is now open from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The other is that our elementary library is open for students prior to the start of school, but is not open after school.

Using Testing Data

Many of us can remember taking "special" tests at school. Those that were bigger than something like a spelling test, or an end of unit exam. Tests have changed drastically since then.

Our district participates in the MCA's in the spring; these are state required exams and are used to determine a schools status in respect to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Students in 3rd through 6th grade take math and reading MCA's. Students in 5th grade also take a science MCA test.

In the elementary we also test all students through NWEA. NWEA also looks at both reading and math skills. These tests are computer generated and move students through based upon their responses. If students do well, the difficulty of the questions gradually gets higher. If students struggle, the difficulty goes down. We will use NWEA two times during this school year.

Three times during the school year students will do AIMS testing. This only looks at reading skills. These tests are very brief to give, and students enjoy the one on one time with an adult that occurs in the process.

Data generated from MCA's, NWEA, and AIMS is used by teachers to determine what areas students need the most instruction in. The tests themselves are beginning to provide more detailed information. We continue to learn how to use this data more effectively. Grade level teams meet at least two times a month to review this data and make decisions about instruction.

As school staff we invite you to partner with us in encouraging your child(ren) to always do their best. We want you to understand the important information we gather through testing, this may give you some words to use as you talk with your child(ren) at home.

Establishing Routines

A main focus of classroom teachers at the beginning of each school year is establishing routines. They literally teach students expectations, and practice doing classroom routines. Many teachers use practice that includes student modeling, practicing the correct and incorrect way to do things.

Why do we spend time doing this?

Establishing routines and ensuring that students understand what is required sets them up for future successes. We do this right away so that students develop good classroom habits. Students then can manage themselves better.

Kids actually thrive within routine – even outside of the classroom. Think about the routines you have established in your family. Or, think about ones you need to develop – remember this is good for kids.

There are key home routines that lead to more successful school days for students. First, sleep is very important. Young brains need a lot of sleep, 8 – 10 hours is what research tells us. Sleep is about more than just a sanity break for parents. The young brain is rapidly working on making connections. The brain is best able to do this when the body is at rest.



Next, good nutrition gets a body ready to learn. Children develop tastes for foods as they mature. Be sure to keep trying nutritious foods with your children at home as something they had not liked previously may eventually please their taste buds.

More and more research is coming out on the importance of movement. The brain needs this too! Taking family walks is a nice way for everyone to get more movement into their day. It is also a nice way to connect with kids as conversation often flows better with movement. So, before you ask the dreaded question, “What did you do at school day?” put on your tennis shoes and ask when you are on a walk.

Finally, establishing a homework routine that works for your family’s schedule is essential to getting the new school year off to a good start. Everyone has different learning needs. For example, some children process information best when it is silent while others like some background noise. Talk with your child about how you can help them create a productive homework environment.

Health Office Update

Parents are doing a great job of getting the office the necessary information when reporting a child ill. Just a reminder that we are required to track flu like symptoms. When calling a child in sick we will be asking if the child has a fever, cough, or runny nose.

As the media attention in respect to H1N1 is not going away we want to provide some of the insight that we have learned from both Otter Tail Public Health, and the Minnesota Department of Health. Both agencies remind us that H1N1 is similar to the seasonal flu that we have had experience with in the past. We are learning that clinics and hospitals are not doing mass testing for this flu. For the most part the recommendation is to take care of yourself with any flu like symptoms – rest and hydration are critical. Students with symptoms should stay home and not return to school until they have been symptom free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications. H1N1, like other illnesses, has raised concern for people with risk factors (infants, elderly, and people with repertory illnesses).



News in small town travels quickly. Please remember that just because a person has flu like symptoms does not mean they have H1N1.

Attention Parents of 4th – 6th Graders

Perspective Tutorial for Elementary Parents

If you are the parent of a 4th, 5th or 6th grader then you probably have heard about the MCAs or the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments that take place each spring. Would you like to learn how your family can use this test data to support or enrich your child's individual educational experience? If you would like to learn more about an online learning resource from Pearson called...

Perspective for Families then please join us for an informational meeting on

Tuesday, October 13th at 6:30 p.m. in the Elementary School Computer Room.

Parent Volunteers

Thanks so much to the 53 parents who filled out the volunteer forms that were included in the back to school mailing.

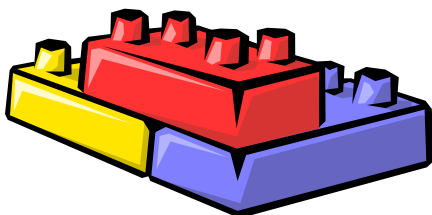
The information has been shared with teachers, the office, and library staff. Parents will be contacted as needs arise.

Anyone else interested in volunteering can pick up a volunteer form from the office.



Donations Needed

We are working to begin a Lego club at the elementary school. To get this up and running we need Lego donations. If you know of someone who has a stash that they are not using please suggest that they donate them to the elementary school. We will happily accept gently used Lego's to build a bank for this program. Thanks.



Thinking Games

Parents often ask us about things that they can do to improve learning for their children. Recently I saw some information on games that could be done when families are on the go.

“Would You Rather?” is a game that can be played almost anywhere. Think of two options and ask which is preferred and why. For example, “Would you rather live near the beach or mountains?”

“Three Favorites” is a game some kids came up with. For this someone picks a category (outfits, movies, foods, etc.), and everyone tells their top three choices.

Another game is “What Doesn't Belong?” For this family members can take turns naming items and asking the others to explain which is the odd one out and why. Kids like this game because there can be more than one “right” answer. For example, when “owl, ostrich, and eagle” are named one answer could be “ostrich” because they do not fly, or “owl” because it hunts at night.

What family game can you create?