

Principal News for February/March 2010

Dear Noyes Families,

It has been a busy time at Peter Noyes! There is so much for me to share with you, so this newsletter is rather long. I thank you in advance for taking the time to read it.

Class Sizes and Budget Realities

Recently, several grade 4 families have shared with me their frustration and concern over the current class size (24-26 students) for their youngsters and have asked me about what they can expect in grade 5 regarding class sizes. Some have also shared that they assume there will be 5 sections in fifth grade in 2010-2011 since there are currently five sections of grade 5. This is not the case. The reality is that we are slated to have 4 sections of grade 5 for next year and that class sizes will remain slightly over guidelines (School Committee guidelines for class sizes are: k=20, gr. 1&2=22, gr. 3-8=24). I am sharing this with the larger Peter Noyes community because the reality is that the number of sections at each grade level can change year to year depending on two factors: student enrollment at each grade level and budget. When cuts are necessary, the district administration and School Committee look at grade levels that could sustain a reduction and still remain reasonably close to class size guidelines. That being said, the most important thing all parents can do is stay apprised of budget planning for next year. It currently looks like our grade 5 students may have larger class sizes next year, but it is also true that other grade levels may also be impacted depending on what transpires over the next few months related to the budget. If we had to reduce further, grade levels could sustain serious hits including class size numbers that are far above the 26 students we currently have in grade 4. The most important thing you can do is stay informed. Dr. Brackett routinely posts this information on the district website. In fact, his most recent presentation to the Finance Committee is available and I encourage you to check it out.

Redistricting

As many of you know, the School Committee has voted to redistrict approximately 160 families from around the district to increase the number of students at Haynes (due to declining enrollment which was expected to continue to fall over the next several years). This means some of our Noyes families will be moving to Nixon next year and some of the Loring families will be coming to Noyes. Each of the "receiving schools" is holding a Principal Coffee to welcome the new families and offer the opportunity to visit the school and meet the administration and PTO. For all of our families who will be transferring next year, I would just like to say that we will miss you and that you are always welcome to come to our Noyes events.

Parent Conferences

Please know that an additional ILAP (early release day) has been set aside for "spring" parent conferences this year. The dates are March 10 and 24. I encourage you to come into school to meet with your child's teacher for a short conference on your child's progress. Specific dates and times should be scheduled with your child's teacher.

Principal Coffee/PTO Meeting

Please note that the next evening Principal Coffee/PTO meeting is slated for Tuesday, March 9, at 6 p.m. I will speak about the process of class placement for the upcoming year, but I will also field questions on any topics that are of interest to you in the school.

Science Fair

Every year I am amazed at the level of participation in our school-wide Science Fair. Our Science Fair is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, and we look forward to seeing many students and their families enjoying this amazing event. I'd like to thank all the parents and teachers who support our children in preparation for this evening. We could not do it without you.

If you are looking for science games and activities you can do at home with your children. A few web sites have been recommended to me and I encourage you to check them out as well. Puzzles, games, and science fair ideas are just a few of the resources you can find at: www.sciencenewsforkids.org. You can find interactive games on geography, astronomy, and zoology at: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Games>. Enlisting the help of Tinker Bell and the rat from the movie *Ratatouille*, the U.S. Department of Energy provides a great selection of games and activities on energy and conservation at www.eere.energy.gov/kids/games.html.

Read Across America Month

We celebrate March in a big way here at Peter Noyes. Read Across America Day begins Monday, March 2, on Dr. Seuss' birthday and kicks off our celebration of reading for the month. We will be targeting vocabulary for this year. More information about Read Across America Month will be in the upcoming Friday Flyers.

Early Dismissals Disrupt Learning

Please do not dismiss your children from school early. I have noticed lately that more parents are picking up their children from school before the day is officially over at 3:25 p.m. The primary reason you should not dismiss early is that your children are missing instruction. Teaching and learning is occurring all the way up until we pack up and get ready to go just a few minutes prior to dismissal. As I visit classes, I have noticed that they are interrupted often around 3 p.m. for children being dismissed early. This impacts the child leaving early and it interrupts instruction for all. It does have a negative effect, so please be sure your child stays the entire school day. As a little anecdote, there was a third grader the other day in the middle of a science experiment with his class when the room was interrupted at 3:05 for him to be dismissed. I noticed he was disappointed and his partner was left to finish solo. I later learned that the pick-up parent suggested that she didn't think there was too much going on after 3 anyway. Trust me; there is plenty going on. In this case, the child missed the lesson closure, one of the most important parts of any lesson. We need your help to make this better. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us capitalize on all our instructional minutes every day and minimize the classroom disruption early dismissals cause.

Best Regards,
Annette Doyle