

FORT RIVER PARENT NEWSLETTER

SUCCESSFUL LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

October 30, 2009

Dear Fort River Families,

As you know, we have been carefully monitoring the absentee rate and reasons for absences. I appreciate all of your assistance and support, especially by keeping your children home when they are sick. Our absentee rate is slowly dropping, but we will remain vigilant in our monitoring and in our plans to increase the social distance in order to lessen opportunities for transmission of germs.

I would like to offer a special invitation to our “Coffee with the Principal” next Friday, November 6th at 8:30 in the cafeteria. We are pleased to have Superintendent Rodriguez join us, and we hope you can attend.

On the personnel side of things, Kari Gracie has resigned her Physical Therapy position in our school system (Kari has worked in many of our buildings). Kari accepted a position closer to her home. We thank Kari for her terrific work at Fort River and wish her the best in her future endeavors. Also I would like to thank Laura Dombrowski for her excellence as an ELL teacher at Fort River. Laura is leaving us for personal reasons, and she will be missed. Our best wishes go out to Laura and Kari. And finally, Melissa McKinnon, our Special Education teacher for grades K-2, recently had her first child, a healthy baby boy named Benjamin! Congratulations to Melissa and her husband as they grow their family!

Happenings around the building ...

The best part of my job is being able to spend time in classrooms and in all parts of the building. I recently spent some time observing the children in their Physical Education class with Dianna Spaulding. It was simply terrific! As some students bowled, others were keeping score and using their math skills. Mrs. Spaulding set up this math connection that helps students understand the game of bowling and provides an opportunity to work on their computational skills and thinking about numbers. As you may know, keeping score in bowling is almost a lost skill as the computers at the bowling alleys do all of the work for us. Many thanks to Dianna for integrating math into P.E. and keeping the lost art of scorekeeping alive.

I also visited a morning math review lesson in José Cantillo’s fifth grade classroom. I saw a teacher fully engaged with students, demonstrating how to analyze a complex math problem involving algebraic concepts. I watched children work at their seats as their

teacher demonstrated the various steps of this challenging, multi-step problem. It was wonderful to watch great teaching – to see José offering positive feedback, corrective feedback, and very clear instruction to a large group of learners with varied needs. José, thank you!

Finally, I had the opportunity to watch Sue Dunbar teaching a flute lesson with a group of four students in sixth grade. What a pleasure! Sue teaches with such enthusiasm, skill, and efficiency (her time with the students is short – she must be very efficient). It is clear that the students are learning and enjoying their time with Ms. Dunbar as she models appropriate technique, guides the students through the practice, and leads them toward independence as young musicians. Sue, thank you!

Perhaps your children are a bit like my daughters. That is, you may ask your child, “What did you learn in school today?” And your child may say, “Nothing.” You may ask, “What happened in school today?” And their response may be, “Nothing.” As adults, we all know that there is much that happens each day in school. So I hope that providing these brief glimpses into our school days, you can get a little more specific about the questions you ask your child. There is so much “good stuff” that happens each day, and I hope we can continue to partner with you to make each child’s experience the best it can possibly be.

I hope you have a terrific Halloween weekend. –**Ray Sharick**

FUTURE DATES

FALL FESTIVAL HAS BEEN CANCELLED FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30TH

School Council Meeting...Thursday, Nov. 5th...7:00 pm...F.R. Conference Room
Coffee With A Principal...Friday, November 6th...8:30 am...FR Cafeteria
Veterans Day.....Wednesday, November 11th.....NO SCHOOL
Parent Council Meeting...Wednesday, Nov.18th ...8:45 am...Fort River Cafeteria
Teacher Curriculum/Workday.....Friday, November 20th..... NO SCHOOL
Thanksgiving Recess...Thursday, Nov.26th & Friday, Nov. 27th...NO SCHOOL

FYI: Future Chorus Concert Dates

Thursday, January 14th...7:00 pm...Middle School auditorium

Thursday, May 6th...7:30 pm...Middle School auditorium

SCHOOL PICTURES ARE HERE!!

We hope you are pleased with the results of this year's school pictures. If you did not order a picture package, your child still receives a free class photo. ***Due to printing delays, some children will receive their class photo next week.**

If you are dissatisfied with the photograph or your child was absent on the original picture day, **PICTURE RETAKE DAY** is scheduled for **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10th from 9am-12pm.**

A photographer from Gynn & Barrett will be at Fort River to re-photograph your child at no extra charge. Please have your child return their **entire** picture package to the photographer on retake day (**please keep the class photo**). If your child was absent on picture day, send in the original order form with payment. Some teachers may have held on to the order forms.

If you would like to order more photos or have any other concerns about your order, please contact Gynn & Barrett Studios at 413-532-9406 or 800-639-2104 or www.gynnandbarrett.com. Please do not contact the school.

Thank you,
Pam Rietkerk
256-2605
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Learning and growing in a school committed to safe practices!

First, please remind your children about the importance of safe riding on our buses to and from school. The majority of our students are well behaved and follow the bus rules. However, there are some children who will benefit by your reminder that riding a bus to and from school is a “privilege” that can be discontinued IF a student does not comply with rules and so endangers the safety of themselves and others. Bus conduct reports are utilized by drivers, monitors and school personnel and are sent home to you when a child is having difficulty managing his/her behavior.(See attached list of our agreed upon standards and consequences for safe bus riding.) Please call or email me if you have any questions about our policy or your child’s bus ride.

Second, your vigilance at drop off and pick ups is “paying off” with safer arrivals and departures. Most drivers are proceeding at the 5 mph posted speed, observing the cross walk for children and not traveling in the bus lanes. Your children are safer as we all remain vigilant at these transition points in our day. Our consults with the Amherst PD and Ron Bohonowitz at the district’s Central Office, continue. At this time, it seems likely that increased changes to parent pickup and drop off traffic will best result from major changes in our physical layout and subsequent transportation routines. We’ll keep you informed as more information comes in from the town’s engineer on Friday, Oct 30th. Thanks to you and a special acknowledgement to the parents who have shared input throughout the first 40 days of this school year.

Third, we value your visits to the school. Please come into the office, sign in and put on a bright yellow welcome visitor badge. We are striving for 100% of our adults wearing identification and/or visitor badges.

Finally, please update your phone and/or email as changes occur. The school office needs to have a reliable way to reach you during the school day.

Thank you for your continuing school-home partnership with us. Safe practices are at the foundation of an environment committed to optimal learning and growing.

Susan Kennedy Marx, Assistant Principal

Bus Rules

Do...

- Be courteous to everyone
- Stay seated with legs forward.
- Behave the way you would in school.
- Follow the bus driver's instructions.

Don't...

- Hit or otherwise hurt anyone.
- Call people names.
- Purposely provoke others to anger.
- Change seats.
- Put your legs/feet in the aisle.
- Put hands/arms out the window.
- Throw things on the bus.
- Shout.
- Eat or drink anything.

LET'S KEEP THE BUS SAFE FOR EVERYONE!