

FORT RIVER PARENT NEWSLETTER

SUCCESSFUL LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

September 18, 2009

Dear Fort River Families,

I'd like to extend a special invitation to all families for the next Principal's Coffee at 8:30am on Friday October 2. We generally have good attendance, but I hope we can bring in more parents/guardians to this regular event. We typically have no formal agenda - just an opportunity to meet with each other and continue to build the home-school relationship. Susan Kennedy Marx and I will also be reaching out to Superintendent Rodriguez and other community members to join us for this Coffee and others. I hope you can attend – please spread the word!

A few happenings around the building this week:

I'd like to take a moment to share what I have observed this week in some classes - it is *too* good to keep secret! I spent some time observing the excellent teaching of Mrs. Magner in the Art Room - she was working on 3-D paintings on canvas (based on the work of Sol Lewitt) with Ms. Simon's sixth graders. The instruction was terrific and students were engaged! However, what I observed was not only students learning about Art style and technique, but also a truly integrated Art-Math lesson. Students were measuring angles in Art as they prepared their canvas for paint; and then, Mrs. Magner and Ms. Simon split the students (made possible by some masterful scheduling) so Ms. Simon was able to take 1/2 of the class back to her room for specific instruction on the math concepts that are in our new sixth grade math curriculum (groups switch on different days so all students receive the necessary instruction in both locations). This type of meaningful integration is an ongoing goal at Fort River. Mrs. Magner will be able to integrate Art with other sixth grade math lessons on a rotating basis over the course of the year so that all children have an opportunity to see the connections between Art and Math.

Classroom teachers have been very busy implementing the beginning of the year writing prompts (ask your child about his/her prompt). We ask students to respond to a specific question, or prompt, and write their response based on what they know about standards, conventions, and methods for conveying a clear response in their writing. Teachers then score these responses and develop a plan for instruction based on student strengths and needs.

The Kindergarten teachers have been busy establishing routines and structures for their students, and it has been a pleasure watching them get started! I recently watched Ms. Rondeau's kindergarten class experimenting with various types of apples by doing a "taste test." The children were able to sample 4 types of apples - and then Ms. Rondeau asked them to share their descriptors (sour, sweet, crunchy, delicious, etc.) as she charted their comments. These language objectives were connected to a math graphing activity that was also done in the class. It was a pleasure to watch the children engaging in this lesson.

SAFETY UPDATE

Thank you Fort River Parent/Guardian Community for your input and careful vigilance in our parking lots at drop off and pick up. Your children and so our students are reliably using designated cross walks and most drivers are proceeding at 5 mph as directed. Our volume continues to be high, especially in the afternoons.

This week our building based safety team met with David Slovin, the district's liaison to safety planning. Staff on the team includes our administrative secretary, guidance counselors, a teacher, the head custodian and administration. As we consult more broadly in the week ahead with the town's engineer and the Amherst Police Department, we'd like to add one or more parent/guardians to our task force. Please email Raymond Sharick with a cc to Susan Kennedy Marx if you are interested in serving the school in this way.

Our K-6 students are our youngest population in the schools and as they learn and grow in this wonderful school community, each deserves 100% safety as they enter and exit the building each day! We can see that goal met each and everyday.

GOOD NEWS!

These are budgetary times that challenge schools and families. Today we received good news from the National Education Association that our school received a \$5000 "Learning and Leadership" grant that will support teachers and students to work together to ensure that all learners are familiar with the content vocabulary essential to comprehension. We know that enhancing and extending essential vocabulary, at the foundation of learning, supports accelerated progress. Our knowledge of this instructional focus is especially important if a student is learning content and acquiring the English language simultaneously. Special thanks to Tori Weed, English Language Learning teacher; Joanne Morgan from UMass; and Mary Kiely, from our district office – your work is truly appreciated! Once again, it is clear that Fort River School is all about highly professional teaching and top notch, differentiated learning.

PAPERWORK, PAPERWORK (but, IMPORTANT paperwork!):

Free/Reduced Lunch Forms – If you have not already completed one of the forms, please do so as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the main office.

Emergency Contact Forms – We have approximately 95% of the emergency forms at this point! Thank you for sending this VERY important information to us so quickly. Let's do our best to get the remaining 5% of the forms turned in by September 30th. Again, please call if you have any questions or have misplaced your form. Ultimately, this is about safety for your children! Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Ray Sharick
Principal

Susan Kennedy Marx
Assistant Principal

“Your children need your presence more than your presents.”

Jesse Jackson

OPEN HOUSE!

YOU ARE INVITED!

Wednesday, September 23rd

All parent/guardians are encouraged to attend our Parent Night/Open House. This is an evening to meet school staff and learn about the educational program planned for your child's class.

7:00 – 7:30 PM

- Art, Music, Physical Education, Computer Lab
- Special Education Staff
- Guidance Counselors (Rooms 13 and 14)
- Instrumental Music representatives (Library)
- ELL parent orientation -Grades Kindergarten-3 (ELL Room)
- Language Arts and Math Resource Teachers – Library

7:30 – 8:00 PM

- Classroom Teacher Presentations – Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Grades
- Instructional materials will be on display in classrooms Grades 4-6
- Library Open

8:00 – 8:15 - Transition Time

- ELL parent orientation-Grades 4-6 (-ELL room)

8:15 – 8:45 PM

- Classroom Teacher Presentations – 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades
- Instructional materials will be on display in classrooms – Grades K-3
- Library Open

NOTE:

- This is an evening for parents. Except for a few classes of students whose teachers have invited them to be a part of the program, students are not invited.
- **Conference Sign-ups:** A sheet will be posted in each classroom (grades 1-6) so parents may sign up for an individual conference. Teachers will not be discussing progress of individual students on this evening.

PARKING:

It is important that Fire Lanes are kept open during Open House and all other times. The Amherst Fire Department needs to know that they could get fire engines to the school in an emergency.

- Parking is permitted in all marked spaces.
- Parking is permitted on the right side of the entrance and exit roads, but **NOT on the left side.**
- Parking is **not permitted** along the curb in front of the school. Please keep fire lanes open!

FUTURES DATES

School Committee Meeting...Tues., September 22nd7:00 pm.....H.S. Library
Fort River Open House.....Wednesday, September 23rd
Picture Day.....Thursday, September 24th
Coffee With A Principal...Friday, October 2nd ...8:30 am....Fort River Cafeteria
Columbus Day.....Monday, October 12thNO SCHOOL
Parent Council Meeting...Thurs., October 15th...7:00 pm...Fort River Library
Elementary Early Dismissal @ 1:20...Thurs., Oct. 22nd ...Parent Conferences
Elementary Early Dismissal @ 1:20...Tues., Oct. 27th ...Parent Conferences

HITCHCOCK CENTER EVENT:

Don't miss the **Hitchcock Center's Enchanted Forest!** This non-scary Halloween family event takes place ***Friday, October 23 and Saturday, October 24 from 5-8:30p.m.*** Adults and children of all ages will enjoy meeting our magical "Animals in Disguise" as you are guided along the pumpkin-lit trail. Walks leave the Center every 15 minutes and last 45 minutes. Enjoy crafts, games, and snacks for sale. Pre-registration required. Register early as this event fills fast! Call 413-256-6006.

BOY SCOUT INFORMATION:

Boy Scout Troop 500 Amherst is having an Open House for prospective scouts and their families Tuesday, September 22 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at the South Congregational Church, 1066 Southeast Street, Amherst. Troop 500 has a 50+ year history in Amherst working with school-age boys. Troop activities are organized and run by the boys, including weekly meetings, monthly campouts, and projects in the community. Our Scouts learn practical outdoor skills and develop leadership skills while having a lot of fun. For more information, contact Scoutmaster Bob Cowles at (413) 665-8968.

THIS IS A NON-SCHOOL SPONSORED EVENT



Amherst Education Foundation, Inc.

Investing Today in Our Children's Future



Amherst Education Foundation announces the 15th Annual Trivia Bee

Amherst's "Not to Miss" Fall Event!

Thursday October 29th, 2009

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Amherst Middle School Auditorium

The Amherst Education Foundation proudly announces the date for their Fall fund-raiser. This has become the Amherst fall event "not to miss"! Sponsor a team for only \$175.00, or join a team and test your trivia IQ.

Under the direction of Ellen Story, over 30 teams will vie for bragging rights to be "Trivia Bee Champion". Citizens Bank was the 2008 Champion. The fun evening will include refreshments, lots of trivia and a raffle.

Admission is free with donations to AEF welcome.

See our website for details

www.amhersteducationfoundation.org/

or contact

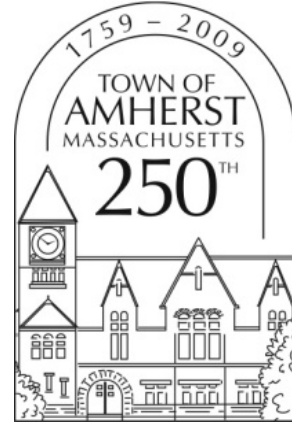
Mary Donoghue at 253-7016

Aj.donoghue@verizon.net

We look forward to your support!

Celebrate and support Amherst farms at the

Town of
Amherst



 **Farm
Festival**

Saturday, October 3

9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Amherst Town Common

- ~ Live music!
- ~ Delicious local food!
- ~ Exhibits
- ~ Farm tours
- ~ Farm equipment
- ~ Hay maze, games, activities for kids!

For more information, visit www.amherstma.gov

Children who eat dinner with their families fewer than 3 times a week, are:

- 3½ times more likely to abuse prescription drugs
- 3½ times more likely to have tried marijuana
- more than 2½ more likely to have tried cigarettes
- 1½ times more likely to have tried alcohol

Signs and Symptoms of Drug and Alcohol Abuse

- Missing school or declining grades
- Dropping afterschool activities or hobbies such as sports or dance
- Increased secrecy
- Unusual borrowing of money
- Depression
- Leaving old friends and getting new ones
- Sudden mood changes
- Irresponsible behavior and poor judgment

WHAT IS SPIFFY?

The Strategic Planning Initiative for Families and Youth is a group of concerned community members in Hampshire County interested in addressing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among youth. There are currently 60 active members from all sectors of the community.

OUR MISSION:

SPIFFY'S mission is to collaboratively initiate, coordinate, and sustain prevention and intervention efforts that reduce youth substance use and abuse within Hampshire County.

OUR WORK INCLUDES:

Increasing protective factors and reducing risky behaviors among youth.

Evaluating and monitoring risky behaviors and sharing data in the community.

Strengthening collaboration among all local stakeholders.

Promoting best practices.



Strategic Planning Initiative for Families & Youth
Hampshire Educational Collaborative
97 Hawley Street, Northampton, MA 01060

For more information about Family Day
or the SPIFFY Coalition:
413.586.4900 x177
spiffy@collaborative.org

SPIFFY is administered by the Hampshire Educational Collaborative

Family Day



A day to eat dinner with your children™

Celebrated on:
Tuesday

September 29th, 2009

PARENTS:

whether you're cooking,
eating take-out
or having a picnic,
what your kids really want
at the dinner table...
is YOU!

STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH



WHAT IS FAMILY DAY?

Family Day—A Day to Eat Dinner With Your Children™ is a national event created by the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University in 2001, to promote frequent dinners as an effective tool in preventing youth drug and alcohol use, and to remind parents of the importance of being engaged in their children's lives.

MAKE A DATE FOR DINNER...

Family dinners are about more than simply sharing a meal.
Dinner is a great time to connect with your kids.

WHY ARE FREQUENT FAMILY DINNERS SO IMPORTANT?

CASA has found that children and teens who have frequent family dinners:

- Are less likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs
- Are more likely to do well in school

OTHER STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP PREVENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Set a good example
- Know where your children are, their activities and friends
- Set fair rules and hold firmly to them
- Maintain open lines of communication (even if your child doesn't appear interested)
- Learn the signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse and what might put them more at risk

Although parents don't always believe it, parents are a powerful influence in preventing their children from using drugs or taking risks! You really do make a difference.

Turn off the TV,
ignore the phone
and use this time
to talk to your kids

Plan the menu
together

Share highs and
lows from the day

Have fun
together!



Family Day

A day to eat dinner with your children™
Celebrated on: **Tuesday September 29th, 2009**

For more parenting tips visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org and www.theantidrug.org

