

Principal's Newsletter

E.C. Stevens School

November-December 2012

Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving is here, and our students have made great progress in all areas. We are thankful for the efforts that our teachers, parents, and students put forth. Each day, I observe students who are writing words for the first time, or developing their stories. I see young scientists who are studying ecosystems or rocks and minerals. Students are practicing reading with fluency and expression, and some students are reading for the first time.

Lessons from Raking Leaves

For the past few weekends, even before Hurricane Sandy arrived, I have been raking the countless leaves in my front and back yard. The yard is small, but there are so many trees—maples, birch, hickory, oak. For me, the raking is a job to complete—do as much as I can so that the leaves don't become sodden or wet. I aim to clear the lawn by the end of the day, drag the leaves way into the woods behind my backyard, mow the grass again, and keep it pristine. For my son, Noah, that is *not* his goal.

Noah and his friends want the pile of leaves for themselves. They will rake, blow, and pile leaves into their own big pile for running and hiding. Noah even has a green plastic periscope for peering at traffic while hiding under the leaves (I always wonder if he can breathe).

I drag the blue plastic tarp over to *their* pile, and they give me the look: "Don't take these leaves into the woods," their eyes are pleading. My dilemma is before me. Do I finish my job, or do I end their game. You know the answer.

Many people realize that children use playtime as an unstructured opportunity to discover, explore, and experiment. This time builds their social skills—their ability to cooperate, make decisions, argue their point, and change their minds.

Soon enough, Noah and his buddies run away to do something else. Then I have my chance...

~Nick Brophy

Common Core Standards

This year, our district has joined the state and some 45 other states in embarking upon instruction in Common Core State Standards for language arts and math. The National PTA has an excellent website devoted to explaining the Common Core for parents (<http://www.pta.org/5308.htm>).

According to <http://www.corestandards.org/> the common core provides a shared vision for math and language arts instruction. The standards are designed to prepare students for success in college and careers—they offer knowledge and skills that students need to compete in a global economy.

In Wallingford, our district is involved in a process of curriculum revision with the Common Core. In language arts and math, our teachers are using units of study that reflect the change in concepts. For example, in math at the early elementary level, our students are engaged in deepening their understanding of numeracy. In Kindergarten, our students are counting and matching numbers to 20. First graders are adding and subtracting within 20; while grade 2 students are telling time to 5 minute intervals.

At home, you can help! Practice math facts—for our youngest students, they simply need help counting and recognizing their numbers as a start. Older students will require explanation of how time works, for example. There are many excellent websites and apps that are useful in mathematics practice. If you find a good one, let me know. Try these teacher-recommended sites:

Math Websites

<http://illuminations.nctm.org/Activities.aspx?grade=1>
www.dreambox.com
www.mathblaster.com
www.uptoten.com

Language Arts Websites:

www.starfall.com
www.ezschool.com
www.abcya.com

Stevens/Pond Hill Family Educational/Learning Nights 2012 - 2013

Family Educational/Learning Nights Dates and Topics

December 2012 – Yale University Planetarium Night (2 Nights one for each school)

January 2013 – Sheehan Planetarium Night (2 Nights one for each school)

Wednesday, February 6, 2013 – Family STEM Night @ Stevens

Monday, February 25, 2013 – Family STEM Night @ Pond Hill

Tuesday, March 12, 2013 – Family Literacy Night – Pond Hill and Stevens Combined

Saturday, April 6, 2013 – Bertini Park Low Ropes Course (Parent and Child Program)

Saturday, April 28, 2013 – Bertini Park Low Ropes Course (Parent and Child Program)

For more information on programs, please contact Chris Stone at cstone@wallingford.k12.ct.us or at Pond Hill by phone at 203-294-6230.

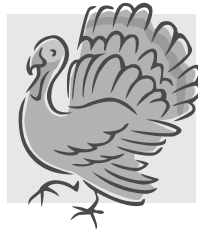
“Nothing you do for a child is ever wasted.”
–Garrison Keillor

Community Spirit

Our students here are bright, generous people—they worked with our Cub Scouts to collect hundreds of rolls of toilet paper in a recent drive for Masters’ Manna. More recently, we have been collecting “Cents for Sandy” to aid hurricane victims. Soon, we will sponsor Holiday for Giving canned food drive, which begins just after Thanksgiving, through December 4. It’s hard to imagine that we will soon begin the winter holiday season. (Time to dust off the “elf on the shelf.”)

From The Superintendent’s Office

The Community Budget Forum has been rescheduled to Wednesday, November 28th, 6:00 p.m. in the Lyman Hall High School Vo Ag Community Room.



Shout Outs!

- To our awesome PTO leaders and members for the successful Fall book fair.
- To the Election Day bake sale committee (sweet treats for voters)
- To the PTO fund-raising committee members, for all of their efforts to raise funds for our schools.
- To those who collect and submit Box Tops for our school
- To the Olympic Paws for Reading Committee—Keep READING, all
- To all of our parent helpers and visitors!

What’s Going On in the Academic World?

Pre-K students are finishing up a unit on “Our Family” and will be learning about Foods we Eat

Kindergarteners will be studying Transportation: “How do people go from place to place?”

First Graders will soon begin a multicultural study: How Children around the World Celebrate the Holidays

Our **Second Grade** scientists are engaging in an in-depth study of Organisms—they’re taking a close look at aquatic life, such as fish and snails. They’re also examining woodland life—millipedes and pill bugs.

Dates to Remember

November

21 – Thanksgiving Early Dismissal 1:30 PM

22,23 No School—Thanksgiving Break

27 – Holiday for Giving Canned Food Drive Begins

December

04 – Holiday for Giving Canned Food Drive Ends

05 – Go for the Stars Assembly

12 –PTAC (6:00 PM) Stevens Teachers’ Room

12 –PTO (7:00 PM) Stevens Cafeteria

15 – Room 5 – Writer’s Workshop

24 – Holiday Break

January 3-Return to School

Early Dismissal Times

Grades 1 & 2: 9:05 am – 1:30 pm

Grade K 9:05 am – 11:20 am

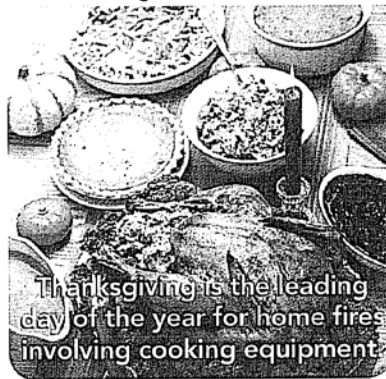
Grade K 11:20 am – 1:30 pm

Thanksgiving Safety

The kitchen is the heart of the home, especially at Thanksgiving. Kids love to be involved in holiday preparations. Safety in the kitchen is important, especially on Thanksgiving Day when there is a lot of activity and people at home.



Did you know?



- » Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stovetop so you can keep an eye on the food.
- » Stay in the home when cooking your turkey and check on it frequently.
- » Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay 3 feet away.
- » Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.
- » Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags.
- » Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- » Be sure electric cords from an electric knife, coffee maker, plate warmer or mixer are not dangling off the counter within easy reach of a child.
- » Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- » Never leave children alone in room with a lit a candle.
- » Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

Have activities that keep **kids out of the kitchen** during this busy time. Games, puzzles or books can keep them busy. Kids can get involved in Thanksgiving preparations with recipes that can be done **outside** the kitchen.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169

www.nfpa.org/education

Get Ahead of the Winter Freeze

It's not too early to begin preparing for the heating season. Check these **10 tips** off your list and get ahead of the winter freeze.

- Our **furnace has been inspected and serviced** by a qualified professional during the last 12 months. *(A furnace should be serviced at least once a year.)*
- Our **chimneys and vents have been cleaned and inspected** by a qualified professional. I have checked for creosote build-up. *(Not cleaning your chimney is the leading cause of chimney fires from built up creosote. This service needs to be done at least once a year.)*
- Our wood for our fireplace or wood stove is **dry, seasoned wood**.
- Our **fireplace screen is metal or heat-tempered glass**, in good condition and secure in its position in front of the fireplace.
- We have a **covered metal container** ready to use to dispose cooled ashes. *(The ash container should be kept at least 10 feet from the home and any nearby buildings.)*
- Our children know to stay at least **3 feet away** from the fireplace, wood/pellet stove, oil stove or other space heaters.
- Our portable space heaters have an **automatic shut-off**.
- Our portable space heaters will be **plugged directly into an outlet** *(not an extension cord)* and placed at least three feet from anything that can burn; like bedding, paper, walls, and even people. *(Place notes throughout your home to remind you to turn-off portable heaters when you leave a room or go to bed.)*
- We have **tested our smoke alarms** and made sure they are working. *(You need a smoke alarm on every level of the home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area. For the best protection, the smoke alarms should be interconnected so when one sounds, they all sound.)*
- We have **tested our carbon monoxide alarms** and made sure they are working. *(Carbon monoxide alarms should be located outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.)*



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