

ATKINSON ACADEMY - November, 2007

17 Academy Avenue, Atkinson, NH 03811

(603) 362-5521

NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PRINCIPAL:

Dear Atkinson families,

It was terrific to have our usual strong showing of parents for our fall conferences. This is an especially good time to learn about grade level standards and the progress your child is making. Thank you for your continued involvement and support of your child's learning.

You may have heard the term "Professional Learning Communities" around our school and district recently. This is a multi-faceted philosophy with several characteristics that I will focus on over the course of the year. One of these is "collaborative teams". The basic structure of the professional learning community is a group of collaborative teams that share a common purpose, working together to learn from one another and focusing on continuous improvement. Our teachers at each grade level, and groups of specialists, have formed teams at Atkinson Academy. They meet every other Wednesday morning to review standards and assessments, and to share best teaching practices for student success. Similar professional learning communities are at work at all schools in the Timberlane district. The collective work of all our

teams allows us to learn and grow as we continually strive to provide the best education for our students.

We welcome students and adults to share recycled items at our Monday Morning Meetings. Again this year we are continuing to raise awareness of our role as "Caretakers of the Earth". We encourage conversations at home about saving earth's resources. Your student may surprise you with some facts he or she has learned at school.

I am starting to see many of you volunteering on a regular basis. Thank you for your support both at school and at home.

Best regards,

Heidi Webster
Principal

Report Card Instructions

Please sign and return the yellow sheet. The white copy of the report card is yours to keep.

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Many of you have probably already noticed that attached to your child's monthly Everyday Math family letter is a blank copy of a self-assessment rubric. This rubric is part of a balanced assessment plan implemented by each classroom teacher as s(he) monitors student progress in the areas of mathematics.

Self assessments allow children to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and engage them in evaluating their competency with the concepts and skills addressed in each math unit. They also allow teachers to gain insights into how children perceive their progress and how to plan for future programming.

For each skill or concept covered in an EDM unit, children check a box to indicate one of the following:

- I can do this by myself. I can explain how to do this skill.
- I can do this by myself.
- I can do this with help.

Once the children have completed their self assessments, teachers will add their appraisal of student skill development, by including their initials on the self assessment rubric. To assist you in monitoring your child's progress in math, blank self assessments will continue to be sent home with future family letters. Completed self assessments will be sent home at the end of every unit.

Kathie Dayotis
Assistant Principal/Curriculum Coordinator

FROM THE GYM

It is hard to believe we are almost in December. It doesn't feel like we have been in school for that long. However, we did just celebrate Thanksgiving, so New Years and all of the other holidays can't be far away.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a couple of gift suggestions. Please make sure that your child has properly fitting sneakers. Especially now that we are inside on the hardwood floor, it is important for all children to be wearing sneakers that fit and can be tied or fastened. It is for their safety and will ensure that they do not have to sit out of any activities. Another gift suggestion would be a calendar marked with the days of the week that your children have PE. I am always disappointed to hear "I forgot we had gym today". Please help your child to remember. This would be the best gift that I could possibly receive.

I love teaching your children. They are a joy to work with.

Jeff Goddard
PE Teacher



FROM THE NURSE'S OFFICE

December is a magical month but also one plagued by viruses, infections, colds and flu. Please help us keep your children healthy and ready to learn by providing them with a nutritious breakfast, snack and lunch. Fruits and vegetables are known to increase the body's resistance to illness. Frequent hand washing and drinking water at school is encouraged. Remember to change toothbrushes frequently and always after an illness. New toothbrushes and floss make great stocking stuffers.

Linda Tobin,
Nurse

LIBRARIAN'S REVIEW

Three Little Cajun Pigs
Written by Mike Artell
Illustrated by Jim Harris

The team that created Petit Rouge: A Cajun Red Riding Hood, have collaborated again on a hilarious version of the Three Little Pigs. Trosclair, Thibodeaux, and Ulysse (also known as "Boo") are three pigs who have plenty to do. They have recently been kicked out of their house by their mom and they realize that it is time to make their own way. Unfortunately, they meet up with Ol' Claude, a 'gator who proceeds to "hiss and puff" as he systematically demolishes the first two homes that they have built. The challenge comes with the house of brick, when he is temporarily tempted by the smell of roux cooking on the stove. Eventually the three little pigs take pity on him and allow him to escape from

becoming gumbo. The Cajun words may be a challenge (there is a glossary in the front of the book) but the funny details and the watercolor and pencil illustrations will beg to be read and reread many times. There are a lot of variations on folktales, but this one should not be missed.

Soupy Saturdays with the Pain and the Great One

Written by Judy Blume

Twenty-two years have passed since Judy Blume published the picture book, The Pain and the Great One. In her latest book, "The Pain" (first grader Jake) and "The Great One" (third grader Abigail) relate seven new stories, each one taking a turn with a new chapter. Playful bickering, bantering and baiting encompasses this sibling rivalry and Judy Blume is an expert at weaving all of this through short chapters. Learning to ride a bike, taking care of an aunt's dog who has serious doggy breath, an unsuccessful sleepover, and fear of haircuts are a few of the angsts of growing up with a sibling. If you read The Pain and the Great One when you were a child, it might be fun to share this new one with the next generation.

Ellen Beckwith
Library Media Specialist



Music News

Our holiday concert for band, strings, and chorus is Tuesday, December 4th, 7:30 pm at the Performing Arts Center (PAC). Don't miss this exciting hour of musical performance by our students.

During the month of November, we sang harvest songs, Native American songs and singing games. Third graders have prepared folders for recorder music and are learning the first three notes; B, A, and G. Please encourage them to practice at home. Fifth graders learned about sea chanteys and the job of chantey man. They also learned about the Erie Canal.

Joyce Peavey
Music Teacher

Computer/Health

It's great being in the computer lab. The students were very excited to see the new computers. Everything is running smoothly.

In the first grade the students are learning Everyday Math games. These games are similar to the ones that they play in the classrooms but in the lab they are competing against the computers. Second graders are learning how to change the font, font size and font color. They are also learning how to save onto the network. Soon the students will be making acrostic poems on the computers. Third graders have started keyboarding. Complaints about achy wrists show us that they are working hard on the fingering skills. Fourth graders have made folders for their different subjects and will now be learning many different skills with Microsoft Word. Fifth grade students will be using the program Inspiration to outline what they are going to be

putting into their brochures about Atkinson Academy. These brochures will be shared with other fifth graders in the district.

My website is up and running. I hope that you will visit it. If you are interested, go to "Staff Directory" on the Atkinson Academy website. Then click on "WEB" that is next to my name.

Anna Lizier
Computer/Health Teacher



This year we have introduced a new traveling sketch journal that students can check out like a library book. It is a hard cover journal in a canvas tote that includes drawing supplies. Students can take it home for two days at a time and draw a picture that reflects their thoughts and ideas about what is important to them and what makes them unique. It has started circulating in the fifth grade. I will be signing up lower grades in the coming months. So far, we have had wonderful results and an interesting mix of ideas. We will occasionally share some journal pages at Monday Morning Meeting throughout the year.

Mrs. Ditoro and I are starting a new venture in the art classroom. We have combined our curriculums to create integrated projects with our students. In December and January, we will be covering themes such as tolerance, diversity, conflict resolution, point of view, and learning how to say and express "I'm sorry" to someone. Mrs. Ditoro and I are really looking forward to working together and having art help to teach and reinforce valuable skills for getting along with one another in our world.

Pam Alexander
Art Teacher

Counselor's Corner

The holidays are quickly approaching. They can be an exciting, fun-filled time for some people, and for others, a time filled with stress and depression.

To make the holidays enjoyable for you and your family, please consider the following tips:

1. Take time to rest, exercise and eat healthy foods. Your body needs extra attention at this hectic time. Remember: Flu season is upon us.
2. Give yourself a break. The holidays are traditionally a family time, so let the entire family pitch in to decorate, shop, bake, clean, etc. This allows the family to spend extra time together.
3. Have some fun with your family. This doesn't have to cost anything. Jump in a pile of leaves, go skating on your street, take a hike in the woods, go biking, etc.
4. Have realistic expectations at this time. Our children become anxious at this time and are apt to be more active. Maintaining family rules will help your children stay settled. We want all our children to have a memorable holiday, but at what expense? Gifts are only material things. The best memories can be made with quality time spent with our family.
5. Take time for yourself. Read a book. Take a bubble bath. Go for a walk. Do something for yourself that will reduce your stress and regenerate your energy.

December's Guidance Theme is Tolerance.

Tolerance is an important skill for all of us to learn. One of the major causes of conflict is Intolerance - not accepting people because they are different. Diversity is what makes the world

go round and we, as members of the human race, need to be more tolerant of others, their point of views, their likes/dislikes, ethnicity, religion, etc... We don't have to agree with or like everything but we need to practice tolerance. By practicing tolerance we can help rid the world of hatred. What better time to start speaking and thinking more kindly of other's than at Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

In Kindergarten, I will be reading a book called Understand and Care.

In Grade 1, I will be reading Frederick and doing an activity about groups.

In Grade 2, I will be reading The Ugly Duckling and we will be brainstorming ways people treat each other that show tolerance and acceptance.

In Grade 3, we will look at how people are different and how they are the same and make connections with both lists.

In Grade 4, I will be co-teaching the lesson in ART with Mrs. Alexander. We will be looking at the uniqueness of many different things in nature and the world and end by making snowflakes.

In Grade 5, we will break into groups and make a continuum of behaviors based on point of view and then compare and contrast the continuums. These will be related to bullies, bystanders and victims.

Mary Beth Ditoro
School Counselor

Reading Specialist's News

The true test to see if your children have mastered their spelling words is application in writing. Although children might misspell words when they are formulating ideas in writing, they need to acquire the habit of editing for spelling. We ask children to circle words they think might be misspelled and try one of the following strategies:

- Check to be sure all sounds and syllables are represented.
- Check to be sure that all syllables have a vowel sound or a "y."
- Use a reference (word wall or dictionary) to check spelling.

Keep in mind that spelling is primarily a visual process, so the strategies that work best encourage children to see the word in their mind's eye. The following strategies are simple, research-based recommendations to improve spelling:

- Practice words with the "Look, Say, See, Write, Check, Rewrite" method. Have your child look at the word and say it. Cover the word and try to see it in the mind. Write the word and check to see if the spelling is correct. Rewrite the word if necessary.
- Slow down and carefully see each letter of a word while spelling.
- Touch every letter with a pencil and say each letter name.
- Trace each letter with a pencil and say each letter name.
- Keep a card file or list of words that cause problems.

I hope you find these strategies useful and effective.

Arlene Amendolara
Reading Specialist

Don't forget to:

- Call the school absence line, 362-5521 (x303) when your child will be absent (this saves us a phone call to you).
- School hours are 8:30-3:00. Please do not drop off students before 8:15.
- Send in a note when your student will be dismissed early (please, no later than 2:30).
- Send a note when your student is taking a bus other than his or her assigned bus (change in going home forms can be found online at www.atkinsonacademy.com). Please include the student's full name, teacher name and date.
- Update phone numbers and emergency contacts promptly.
- Drop items off at the office and we will deliver them to your child. We prefer that you not go to the classroom directly.
- Sign in and wear a visitor pass if you are going beyond the office.
- Put names in your child's jackets, sweatshirts and other belongings.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 12/3 - Author/Illustrator visit, Brian Pinkney
 12/4 - Holiday Concert, PAC, 7:00 pm
 12/5 - Night Owl's Meeting, 7:00 pm
 12/11 - Early Release 1:00 (No PM Kindergarten)
 - PTA E-Board Meeting, 7:30 pm
 12/13 - Tiger Assembly
 12/20 - School Board Meeting @ SAU, 7:30 pm
 12/24 - 1/2/08 **NO SCHOOL - WINTER BREAK**

LUNCH SCHEDULE

The following schedule should help you with plans for lunch with your students:

1st Grade

RECESS 11:45 - 12:05
LUNCH 12:10 - 12:30

2nd Grade

LUNCH 11:45 - 12:05
RECESS 12:10 - 12:30

3rd Grade

RECESS 12:15 - 12:35
LUNCH 12:40 - 1:00

4th Grade

LUNCH 11:00 - 11:20
RECESS 11:25 - 11:45

5th Grade

RECESS 11:00 - 11:20
LUNCH 11:25 - 11:45

MISCELLANEOUS

- * Please note the new Monday Morning Meeting start time of **9:15 am**.

Important Dates to Remember

LIP SYNC – NEW DATE

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Grades 2 & 3, November 30th  
6:30 pm, Dyke Auditorium

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