

Meredith Hill Messenger

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Greetings from the Staff

Happy Holidays from Mrs. Kelsey

This holiday season is busy as ever with all the preparations that families make for the holidays. We do want to make the family times memorable and significant for our children because traditions are very important to us. The children will dream of the latest and greatest items and wish for grand things to come to them. In reality, we must remember that they really need and want Mom and Dad---your time to laugh with them, talk with them and learn with them.

The two weeks away from normal school life can be a rich time of learning and connecting with the your family traditions and the outside world. I want to share with you some

FREE, priceless activities that can be done with your children during the break from school. While we are experiencing cold, dark, wet weather, brainstorm with the children what it must be like to have holiday celebrations if you live in Southern Hemisphere where it's summer time! Kids can write a book and/or draw pictures of themselves and your family in traditional December celebration in a different climate or part of the world.

What would it be like singing Jingle Bells when living in Australia or Brazil where it is summer time? Can you make up new words to a holiday song that would be appropriate in Australia? What would a holi-

day meal be like if you live in a place that is experiencing summer? Do they go on a picnic for their holiday celebration or stay home and cook a turkey? Do they go swimming or camping during their December break from school? Compare and contrast different cultures or families that you know and how they are spending their break. Turn on the camera and film the kids dressed up acting out a play/story that they have created. Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

I hope that your family has a wonderful month and that you enjoy the richness that family and friends bring to your lives.

Phone In Your Child's Absence

Please remember to phone in your child's absence at 253-945-3200. This number is available day or night. Safety calls are made for every child unaccounted for. When our office staff uses their time calling about students who are home sick, a student who is truly missing will remain in danger an unnecessary length of time. For the safety of all Meredith Hill students, please be diligent about making absence calls.



Safety Reminders

All visitors and volunteers are asked to sign in at the office prior to entering any space on campus, both classroom and playground areas. This is for your safety as well as the safety of all Meredith Hill students. Also, Washington State Law requires that any person volunteering within a public school district have a Washington State Patrol background check completed. This form is available at any school office. It takes very little time to complete and is valid for two years. We appreciate your cooperation on behalf of the safety of all our children.

Free Preschool for Low-Income Families

FREE PRESCHOOL FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES: Federal Way Public Schools ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) and Head Start offer free preschool to eligible children from low-income families. Eligibility is based on the child's age and the family's annual income. Both programs give priority to children who turn age four before September 1st of the current school year. If you have any questions or would like an application, call the Information Line at 253-945-2379, and leave a message.

December Calendar

- 3– Battle books discussion
Lunch recesses
- 4– Cookie Day
- 12– PTA Winterfest
Steel Drums 5:30
Festivities begin 6:00
- 18– Cookie Day
- 19– Winter Assembly 2:50
- Dec 22-Jan 4–
NO SCHOOL
Winter Break

January Calendar

- 5– School Resumes
- 8– Cookie Day
- 15– PTA Board Meeting
6:30
- 19– Martin Luther King Jr.
Holiday
NO SCHOOL
- 22– Cookie Day
PTA General Meeting
6:30
- 23– End of First Semester



From the Health Room

Influenza vaccine is recommended for all school aged children for the 2008-2009 influenza.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has expanded recommendations for influenza vaccine to include all children ages 6 months through 18 years. This year, there is plenty of influenza vaccine available in a variety of settings—health care providers, community and Public Health clinics, pharmacies, and work location. We want to be sure that everyone who wants to get vaccinated knows where to get the vaccine, especially those in groups at highest risk for complications if they get influenza.

If you have questions about influenza disease or vaccine, please contact Public Health at 206-296-4774 or visit our website at www.kingcounty.gov/health/flu.

Dress Warmly! Label Everything!

Please make sure your child comes to school dressed appropriately for the outdoors. Our students go out to recess in all kinds of weather, except in extreme conditions.

Also, please label ALL your child's coats, hats, scarves, any other attire, and even lunch boxes. If your child is missing any clothing or personal items, please be sure to check the Lost and Found before or after school. All unclaimed clothing will be donated to the district clothing bank.

Accelerated Reader (AR) Replacing Reading Counts!

Many Meredith Hill students have been involved in Reading Counts over the years. Meredith Hill's reading program will see a change starting the first week in January 2009. We will begin using the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, just as most of the other Federal Way Elementary Schools. The district is supporting Meredith Hill with the software, and much of the financial responsibilities associated with the change. We appreciate their dedication to making sure we have quality and dependable programs for our students that encourage reading.

What is Accelerated Reader (AR)? Your children can check out books from the Meredith Hill library or any other library. After reading a book, students can go on-line to the AR web site (only school computers) to answer 10 questions that test their comprehension on the book they just read. Each book is assigned a certain number of points. If a student passes the AR test, they receive the points associated with the book. The AR software keeps track of the books the students have been tested on as well as the results of their tests. Parents can go on-line to check their child's AR records. Many teachers help students set reading goals that include acquiring points.

What changes will you see in AR? AR works very much like Reading Counts. The primary change will be in the number of points each book is worth. AR assigns the points, and they tend to be about half the value Reading Counts assigned to each book. Therefore, you will probably see some changes in teachers' expectations regarding the number of "points" students are to earn. The second change is that we will have access to tests for 120,000 book titles rather than the 4,842 that we had with Reading Counts. As mentioned above, the other change is the access that parents will have to check on your child's activity with AR and the results of their tests. You don't have to wait for a report from the teacher. We will publish the URL for your access to AR records in our January newsletter.

Our librarian, Mrs. Lunde, and Mrs. Edwards, our library clerk know that the process of labeling books with AR information will be a huge job. So, we are asking for volunteers to help process the MHL library books—all 15,364 of them!!! Would you be willing to help? We think that with a 30-minute training session, volunteers would be ready to work independently with our books. Mrs. Lunde and Mrs. Edwards will hold two training sessions, and you can choose the one session that fits your schedule. Choose between Thursday, January 22, 3:00, and Friday, January 30, 3:00. After attending the training, volunteers are welcome to work in the library anytime Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

If you would like to volunteer for this project, please let us know by filling out the form below. Please return the form to school. We thank you for considering helping with this great project.

(Please complete and return to school)

Yes, I would like to volunteer to help with the processing of Meredith Hill library books.

I will attend the training session on: (circle one)

Thursday, Jan. 22, 3:00

Friday, Jan. 30, 3:00

Name: _____
(please print)

How can we get in touch with you?

Phone # _____ e-mail address: _____