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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Families,

As the holiday season fast approaches, various questions have surfaced regarding the gift-giving policy for staff members. First, it is not an expectation that teachers receive gifts from parents. If families would like to contribute a gift (that meets the specified guidelines described according to the new State Ethics Regulations), then please do so by giving classroom gifts, not personal gifts. For example, contributing a book to the class, or perhaps a board game for students to utilize during indoor recess, or contributing a soccer ball, chalk, or other items for outdoor recess. (The new Ethics Regulations are more strict regarding public employees and teachers.) For more detailed information on this topic, please refer to the PTG section of this newsletter. Also, don't forget that a letter or drawing created by a student is a wonderful way to express appreciation.

Next, Marie Eustache is our new METCO tutor/bus monitor. Marie's first day at Thoreau was yesterday. Marie will be working in many different classrooms throughout the school providing direct services to many students. She will also assist in the nurse's office for a short time each day. Please join me in welcoming Marie to our staff.

This past week I visited many classrooms. I visited a kindergarten room where students were demonstrating what they had learned about the Native Americans. They wore decorative shirts with Native American names and symbols. I am planning to return to their classroom to hear them sing a Native American song. I was also in a second grade classroom. I guided students with the spelling program, Words Their Way. I was in a Grade 4 classroom where students were learning about arrays and reviewing the Turn Around Rule. These same students used our Activ-votes to demonstrate their understanding by answering a series of questions directly related to the lesson on arrays. I was invited to a Grade three play on The First Thanksgiving. Students were careful not to misrepresent or stereotype Native Americans. They did a terrific job! I also observed a small reading group where a student was reading books and poems while utilizing his reading skills to sound out more difficult words.

Earlier this week, the environmental musical group, Bash The Trash, came to Thoreau to demonstrate and perform on stage. They emphasized how to reuse and recycle all sorts of items to make unique sounds with music. Many thanks to our PTG for arranging this.

Last, I met with parents last week for a Principal's Coffee. We talked about many things; one in particular was math and how we can place a greater emphasis on this subject matter. I spoke

about the important work our staff is doing with regard to sharing practice in their grade levels and how it is essential for teachers to discuss and plan math lessons together, as well as to talk about how to support students who may struggle with math concepts and skills and enrich math for those who require further challenge. I look forward to more conversations and work on this topic area.

Happy Holidays!

Kelly Clough

P.S. Parents, please remind your children to dress warmly each day when they come to school. Students should wear a winter coat, hat, and gloves/mittens. Teachers will continue to take students outside during the winter months for recess and other outdoor learning activities.

FROM THE PTG CO-PRESIDENTS

A big thank you to Margaret Cho for coordinating the December Staff Breakfast, as well as to the many 3rd Grade families who generously donated the breakfast goodies and fixings!

We had a nice turnout and some great conversation at the Principal's Coffee last Wednesday. If you weren't able to make it, we hope that you will be able to attend one of the coffees on the calendar for 2011.

Speaking of next year, we just learned of an upcoming event to add to your calendar: the School Committee is hosting a community forum on **February 3**, at 7:30pm in the Little Theatre at CCHS. The forum will update the community on the CCHS building project, answer questions, and provide tours of the current building.

On a final note, we hope you can stop by Papa Razzi **this Thursday night** at 8pm for the Annual Appeal's fleece vests raffle drawing. Enjoy the season!

Karen & Melanie

NEW STATE REGULATIONS ON GIFT GIVING AND ACCEPTANCE

The State Ethics Commission has approved new amendments to the State Ethic Regulations on gift giving to public employees including teachers. Classroom gifts -- to be used in the class -- are preferable. CPS is recommending no personal gifts to avoid an inadvertent violation and Ethics Commission complaint. Here is an overview of some of the explicitly-stated changes in the regulations:

*Gift giving is cumulative over the year. So, while \$50 is still considered a "substantial value", the \$50 is cumulative over the year. For example, if a person decides to give a teacher a personal gift worth \$50, that person could not give another gift for the remainder of the year.

*This cumulative rule applies to class gifts also. The good news is that class gifts are allowed, when the actual participants are not identified, with a maximum value of \$150 per year. So, if you give a class gift card of \$150, you will be unable to give an end of year gift.

*One big change is that a gift of any value given to a teacher by a current student will require the teacher to file a disclosure. This is clearly stated in the regulations.

*It seems that personal or class gifts can be bought for the classroom. These will not require disclosure by the teacher, but the gifts are considered the property of the district. Also, if a gift card is given for class supplies, the teacher is required to save receipts and document what was bought with the card to prove that it was used specifically for the class and all items are “owned” by the district.

If you have any questions, please contact your room parents, PTG co-presidents, or Kelly Clough. Thanks for your assistance

MCAS SCHEDULE – SPRING 2011

March 22	Gr. 4 Long Composition
March 23	Gr. 3 and Gr. 5 ELA
March 24	Gr. 4 ELA
March 25	Gr. 3 and Gr. 5 ELA
March 28	Gr. 4 ELA
May 9	Gr. 3 and Gr. 5 Math
May 11	Gr. 3 and Gr. 5 Math
May 12	Gr. 4 Math
May 13	Gr. 4 Math
May 18	Gr. 5 Science
May 19	Gr. 5 Science

Please be mindful of these dates, and make every effort to have your child(ren) in school on time. Thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

SCHOOL PICTURE DAY RETAKES

If your child sat for retakes of their school photo, please note that pictures will be sent home in his/her backpack within the next 10 days. If there are questions or concerns with the pictures that you receive, please contact Coffee Pond Photography directly. Their Custom Care department can be reached at 800-632-2323 x0, or lifeguards@coffeepond.com

Many thanks to Carmela Gee, Lisa Derosa, Natalie Gekle and Maria Scichilone for their assistance with picture retake day and for distributing the pictures to the children’s classrooms. Picture Day was a huge success thanks to the 12+ volunteers who took time out of their busy schedules, and also thanks to Donna Macone and Maria Schofield in the front office. Thank you all very much for your assistance and willingness to help out.

Robin Grace

GIFT BOOK PROGRAM

A huge thank you to Susan Deysher and Doug Cohen for their purchase of *Birds* by Kevin Henkes!

With the holidays just around the corner, now is the perfect time to give the gift of a book for our Thoreau school library. You can make a gift in honor of a teacher or your child, if you like. Drop by the library to check out the great selection of gift books. For suggestions or more information contact Laurie Garrison at chrisandlaurie@comcast.net.

PTG FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Thank you to the following families for their generous donations this past week to the Annual Appeal: D. Grace, Lewis, Johnson, Griffith, Hansel, Prewitt, Arado, Meehan, Carbeau, Boyle, R. Grace, Hunter, Decker, Umina, Gekle, Carey, Guth, Hirsch, Perkins, Winkler, Feinstein, and Holden.

If you have not had a chance to send in your donation yet, you can contribute by check or with your credit card online by clicking the “Donate” tab at www.thoreauptg.org. Thanks for your support! Join us tonight (**Thursday 12/9**) at 8pm at Papa Razzi’s for the raffle, and find out who are the six lucky winners of Thoreau fleece vests!

And, when doing your online holiday shopping, don’t forget you can access many retailers through the “store” on the PTG website, <http://www.thoreauptg.org/thoreaustore.html>. These companies will donate a portion of your purchases to Thoreau.

Natalie Gekle and Maria Scichilone, Fundraising Co-chairs

METCO MESSENGER

REMINDER! Our December late bus Family Friends Tuesday is **December 21!**

Please remember that for playdates, each family (Concord and Boston) should send a signed, dated note to the school office at the beginning of school on the Tuesday of the late bus. The notes should include the plans for the afternoon and the names and telephone numbers of both families. Boston children can ride Concord children’s buses with a note from the Boston parents granting permission. To catch the late bus, please have students at the Alcott School playground by 4:20 p.m. for the 4:30 bus to Boston.

****HELP!**** We’re still looking for a few Concord host families for Boston kindergartners! Are you a parent of a kindergartner and curious about getting involved with the METCO Family Friends at Thoreau? Please contact Gretchen Nelson to find out more about what we do: ghnelson@me.com.

Your Thoreau Family Friends Team: Gretchen Nelson, Laurine Verrilli, Meg Alexander

BSO FAMILY CONCERT

Yes! We are planning a trip to Symphony Hall for the wonderful BSO Family Concert this year! This season, the family concert is Saturday, **February 19, 2011** at 10 am. Adults are \$20 (plus \$2 service fee and postage) and kids are FREE. This year's theme is Community Pride: A Musical Look at Cooperation, Communication, and Conviction with music of Tchaikovsky, Dvorak and more. Pre-concert activities including the Instrument Playground, instrument demonstrations, and much more, and are available for all ticket holders from 9-10am.

If you would like to attend, please send a check payable to Jennifer Montbach for \$22 per adult and specify the total number of seats you need (i.e. 2 adults, 1 kid, \$44 enclosed). Mail to 45 Pine St., Concord 01742. I must **receive** your check by January 1. Because the concert is early this year (in years past it was in April), I must be strict about the deadline; you may still be able attend if you are late, but won't be able to sit with the group. Email me at jennifer@montbach.net with any questions.

PARENT SURVEY

The parent survey on school safety and climate is still posted on the district website, <http://bit.ly/enZOH4>. Your careful consideration and responses to these questions will help Concord Public Schools as we continue to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. Please note that you will have to fill out one survey per student. Please complete the survey by **December 15**.

LUNCH MENU Week of December 13 – December 17

Monday	Hot Dog
Tuesday	Bagel with Cream Cheese
Wednesday	Homemade Chicken Pie
Thursday	Spaghetti with Meatballs
Friday	Stuffed Crust Pizza

AROUND TOWN

Cyber Safety

Please join us for a forum presented by Asst. District Attorney, Onyen Yong on a critical topic that is impacting our families, schools and communities: cyber safety. The Internet, cell phones and social networking sites offer powerful and almost limitless opportunities to gain knowledge and make contact with others. When used appropriately, they are powerful and positive tools. However, there are many pitfalls and risks to young people. It is important for parents/guardians

and school staff to be equipped with effective prevention and intervention strategies. In this forum, Onyen Yong, Assistant District Attorney and Director of Information Technology for the Middlesex District Attorney's Office, will offer practical information, advice and strategies to help us guide and protect our children. Join us **Thursday, December 9** from 9:15-11:00AM at Concord Middle School Peabody Forum, 1231 Old Marlboro Rd., Concord. No registration is required. No fee to attend. Sponsored by the Concord Middle School PTG in collaboration with the Center for Parents and Teachers, Inc. Please email amartinez@colonial.net at the Center for Parents and Teachers for more information.

It's Time to Spring into Action!

Registration for Spring 2011 lacrosse is OPEN through January 10th; after the 10th, interested players will be placed on a waitlist. Early registration ends January 3. Registrations received after January 3 will be charged a \$20 late fee. The CCYL Program offers lacrosse to girls in grades 3-8, and boys in grades 1-8. No experience is necessary. New players are always welcome! Volunteers are needed and welcomed, no lacrosse experience necessary. Please visit www.ccyouthlacrosse.com to register.

The next issue of Thoreau Announcements will be edited by Anne Mullaney. To submit an item, email announcements@thoreauptg.org. You will receive an e-mail acknowledgment that your submission has been received. Submissions must be school or community related and not commercial in nature. Submissions should be brief, with minimal formatting – no bullet points or underlining, please! Deadline: 9 pm, Monday, December 13, 2010.

This message was sent to the Thoreau mailing list.

REPLIES GO TO THE LIST ADMINISTRATOR, NOT THE MESSAGE AUTHOR!

For support contact thoreau-owner@lists.ptg-concord.org.

Thoreau School: <http://thoreau.colonial.net/>

Thoreau School PTG: <http://www.thoreauptg.org/>