

GALLOPING GOOSE EXPRESS

November 17, 2022

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK:

The weather has gotten cold quite quickly, and a variety of changes are happening which impact your children, the teaching staff, and the school community in general. For me personally, I get to wear some of my favorite sweatshirts and sweaters. Although I would not necessarily call my winter jacket a favorite, on colder days I am quite happy to wear it for the added warmth.

When your children arrive wearing appropriate cold weather apparel, I feel a bit of added warmth myself. I know at times a challenge is had in getting children to dress as adults/parents feel appropriate. I have a bit of assistance for you regarding this. Part of the dress code for our "Little Bears" is:

"Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed for the current or impending weather conditions."

Use this as leverage to let your children know you are just doing what the school expects, and the students need to wear the heavier jacket, sweater, gloves, hat, or boots. Let them know the principal plans to enforce this expectation on all students. Also, kindergarten through second grade students must have snow boots and snow pants to participate in outdoor recess/activities whenever snow is present. I got your back!

One other point, if you are having issues keeping up with providing a larger jacket for a quickly growing child, let Deb Hite or me know. We frequently receive donations from those who have outgrown items and may be able to find the size you need.

On some cold days, I am also hoping to hold a "story time" as students arrive and before school officially starts in the morning. As students arrive, they could go either to their classrooms or join me in the gym. Any student wishing to sit quietly and hear a story read by me is welcome to stay until the announcements start our day. If this is something the children enjoy, I would entertain opening this to parents/guardians who may wish to read a story. The only caveat is all stories need to be approved through the office ahead of time.

Finally, DES is looking to reopen a Friday tutoring program, possibly after Christmas Break. Math and Reading would be the focus of our offered tutoring. Our paraprofessional Jennifer Johnston has agreed to oversee the tutoring if we have enough interested parents/students. The general idea is for the tutoring to take place between 8:00 and 11:30 am on Fridays. The students would be able to participate in either Mathematics or Reading tutoring, or both. Between now and Christmas Break we need those of you who would use this to let us know. Also, please let us know if you have any questions. Together, we can make the best academic preparation possible for your children.

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David Thornton, PhD
Principal, Dolores Elementary

Persistently POSITIVE PBIS! November 2022

Little Bear Families,

It is essential that you be aware of and familiar with our whole school behavior management plan. We are following the well researched and highly effective Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) plan. You can familiarize yourself with it here: <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/what-is-pbis>.

But here is a quick overview of the Positive Discipline side of the program:

After the students have been inundated with positive praise and rewards for following the positive behavioral expectations, they will be successful most of the time. For the times when they struggle and have difficulty we have a "REFLECTION" process. It is important that this process be seen, not as punitive, but as a support to help them change their behavior and be successful the next time.

FOR MINOR BEHAVIORS:

After the teachers have reminded the students and retaught the behavioral expectation, if the student cannot self-correct, they are asked to reflect on their behavior and try to figure out why it is difficult for them and what they can do to FIX AND CHANGE their behavior. For kindergartners and 1st graders this will mostly be verbal discussions with the teacher as soon as she has time. For older students they will have a "reflection corner" in their room where there will be "reflection sheets" they can fill out that will guide their own redirection.

If they simply say, "I'm going to do it right next time," it doesn't address the underlying problem. We want them to think about why it is hard. Is it hard to focus? Is it hard to stop themselves from talking out? Do they have a short fuse that makes them get angry very quickly? Are they discouraged because they have trouble waiting? Has another student been bothering them for a long time and they are bullying back? Once they can figure that out, they can start brainstorming ideas of ways that will help them be more patient, address bullying in a more productive way, and/or help them focus on the boring stuff without disrupting! The reflection papers do help guide the students to make a repair when applicable; and to utilize consequences that the student comes up with themselves. Teachers will help guide them to find something not too harsh . . . but difficult enough to help them remember to follow the expectation the next time. Mostly the reflection process will help them see the incident as temporary and help them have confidence in their ability to try something ELSE , to make a plan that will help them succeed from now on.

The first reflection will simply be in class and with the teacher. If they self correct they will be praised and rewarded. If they struggle a second time with the same behavior in the same week, they will go through the reflection process a second time in another classroom. Moving classrooms is somewhat uncomfortable and will be a stronger motivator to help them focus and come up with a better plan. Parents will be contacted by the teacher and asked to go over the plan with their child. Do you think their plan will work? Can you help them brainstorm new ideas or tweak their plan to ensure their success?

If the same type of behavior occurs in the same week, the student will be sent to reflect with the principal. Parents will be contacted and three parties will brainstorm together . . . why haven't the first 2 plans worked? What new ideas can we try? Is a stronger consequence needed to help them remember and be motivated to implement the positive behavior next time? These conversations will be restorative in nature as well to help everyone feel respected and safe.

The students are given a fresh start and a clean slate every week and the process starts over again each Monday. However, if a student consistently struggles with needing to reflect week after week, as a team (i.e. parent, teacher, student, admin, and others as needed, i.e. special ed teachers, counselor, title 1 teachers, etc.) we might need to meet to brainstorm and establish more support to help that student succeed!

FOR MAJOR BEHAVIORS:

Occasionally a student's behavior will be a safe school violation or serious enough that we don't have time to go through the weekly process. For these times, a student will be sent directly to the principal to reflect with him and the parents for more

immediate supports. This is called an Office Discipline Referral or ODR. But the ultimate goal is the same - what do we need to do to help this student succeed?

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

November 15th: A big CONGRATS to the 2nd grade classes – they won the Canned Food Drive – way to go 2nd'ers!!

November 18 thru 27th: Happy Thanksgiving Break

