

DAYLIGHTS

The Day Middle School Newsletter to Families

October 1, 2007

Volume 2, no. 1

Greetings from Day! Last year, I began to publish *Daylights* as a periodic newsletter. My goal this year is to write monthly, during the first week of each month. I hope that this newsletter will help to keep Day families abreast of our many activities and will reduce the amount of information that gets "lost" in backpacks. I will not be repeating information on our calendar or webpage (so please keep referring to those), but will be providing explanations and further detail on what's happening at Day. If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to this electronic newsletter, contact Pat_Cencini@newton.k12.ma.us or call her at (617) 559-9100.

Back to School Night Success! Thank you all for attending our recent Back-to-School Night program. If you were unable to attend, you will have two other opportunities to meet your child's teachers before the Winter Holiday:

1. Parent Visiting Days afford parents the opportunity to visit classes while they are in session. We will gather in the Library at 7:45 to begin the day with coffee, socializing and the daily W.O.R.D. broadcast/announcements. From there, parents and guardians will be directed to their child's team classes. During the first two periods of the day, you may circulate among the four classes, sit-in on one or two full-periods, or any combination of visits that suit you. The program will run from 7:45-9:54, and you may participate in as much or as little of the program as suits your schedule. Families may visit according to the following schedule:

Wednesday, October 10th - Parents/guardians of 7th graders

Thursday, October 11th - Parents/guardians of 6th graders**

Friday, October 12th - Parents/guardians of 8th graders**

(**Please note that these dates were incorrect in the calendar published in the student agenda.)

2. Conferences allow parents and guardians to meet with their child's individual teachers. There will be a special announcement for conference registration at the beginning of November. We will be using an online registration program as we did last year. Conferences will be held on consecutive Tuesday afternoons from November 27 to December 18.

Food Services Update. Students have received a swipe card with their SASID pin number. The cards are meant to expedite the lines in the cafeteria, and the system seems to be working. Students will be receiving plastic holders with a clip to prevent them from losing their card. If students do misplace their card, cafeteria workers may look up their account in two ways: the student may use the keypad to enter the

SASID pin or the cafeteria worker may look up the student's information by last name. **We will be sure that students get a lunch.** Students may pay cash for items in the cafeteria, or you may prepay on their account in two ways: send a check (or cash) to the school with your child (no minimum) or deposit online at cafeprepay.com (minimum deposit of \$20.) Free and Reduced price lunch applications have been sent home. October 1st is the cut-off date for carrying over applications from the previous year.

Connect-Ed communication system. The Newton Public Schools have purchased a communication software package called "Connect-Ed" through the NTI group. It is designed for schools to communicate with students and families with ease. There are four types of messages that may be sent through this system:

Community Outreach - general announcements delivered to each contact's primary and optional additional phone number.

Attendance Notification - automated daily messages sent to families of students identified as absent or tardy

Emergency Communication - allows emergency message to be sent to up to four numbers/contact

Single Survey - allows recipients to RSVP for school events or answer survey questions

This system is NOT designed solely for emergency use (as in Reverse 911.) I used the system to remind families of our Back to School Night. It could also be used to let particular groups know of delays in return after a field trip, cancellation of an athletic event due to weather, etc.

I have received overwhelmingly positive comments about the system, as well as a few negative ones. I also heard from people who did not receive the call. This is very important in that we are working to update our records (using the yellow Student Information Forms that you returned to us in September), and we want to have the most up-to-date contact information possible.

I am very aware of the need to avoid overuse of the system so that important messages are not lost amid the overload of information that enters our homes on a regular basis. In collaboration with my administrator-colleagues, I will be working on determining protocols for appropriate uses of this powerful communications tool.

Late Arrival Days in January and March. Last Monday night, the School Committee voted to pilot a change to Teacher Inservice Days for the January 11 and March 6 release days. Instead of arriving at 8:00 in the morning and being dismissed at 11:30, students will **arrive late (11:00) and be dismissed at the normal time (2:35.)** Teacher meetings will take place in the morning, instead of the afternoon.

This is change is happening on a trial basis and will be re-evaluated after the March inservice meeting.

Anti-Bullying Assembly. Bullying is an issue of great concern to educators and parents, particularly at the Middle School Level. Last March, the faculties of all four middle schools participated in a workshop on Anti-Bullying strategies provided by MARC, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center from Bridgewater State College. Teachers found the training to be practical and helpful. There will be follow-up assembly for seventh-grade students on Friday, October 12th. This initiative sponsored jointly by I.N.T.E.R.F.A.C.E. and the Physical Education, Health and Wellness Departments promises to give us tools to make our school a more welcoming and safer place for all students.

I hope you have enjoyed this year's first issue of *Daylights*. If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to this electronic newsletter, contact Pat_Cencini@newton.k12.ma.us or call her at (617) 559-9100.