

the Pulse of Plattsburgh City Schools



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Open Houses welcome parents, community



At the beginning of each year, Oak Street Elementary invites parents and guardians of its students to come into the school to meet the teachers and learn more about their child's education. At the Parent Orientation, teachers explained their academic programs and behavioral expectations (see Page 2 for more on PBIS) for the coming year.

At the Open House, besides the "Mrs. Zales Michigan Sauce Bonanza," special area teachers (art, music, health, physical education) spoke to the attendees about their goals for student achievement. After that, students took their parents/guardians to see their classrooms to meet with the teachers.

Finally, the Family School Association went over its agenda for the year and appealed for new members and volunteers. The FSA does fundraising to provide experiences to students such as extra

field trips, special assemblies and evening events such as Jumpin' Jivin' Jaguar Night. Working with the FSA is an excellent way for parents/guardians to become involved in their child's school. Information about the FSA and a list of their activities is on the school website.



More information about the district's Open Houses is included in this issue.

What's New?

Parents!

Visit the MyNutriKids.com site to monitor and pre-pay your child's meals. A link is provided under the 'Lunch Menu' section of the District's website (www.plattsbsd.org).

Please feel free to call Charlene O'Connor, Food Service Director at 957-5093 for further information.



Oak Street Elementary

Annual parent survey: opportunity for feedback

In order to better serve the students and families of the Oak Street School community, Principal Mrs. Zales has instituted an Annual Parent Survey. The survey had a 43% response rate – excellent for its first year. It is designed to enable parents/guardians to inform the school about:

- concerns with their child(ren)'s academic and social needs
- if parents feel they are sufficiently informed about academic progress, extra-curricular activities, school policies, behavior problems and the school's behavioral expectations
- how they are currently receiving information from the school, and would they prefer a different method
- what is their level of parental involvement and would they like to be more involved

Parents should know that the survey responses have been tabulated and that their concerns are being addressed and suggestions incorporated into the Oak Street Elementary School's goals.

For instance, according to the survey, many parents would like to see increased use of Internet contact between the home and school, and Mrs. Zales has already taken action to expand email contact with parents and guardians.

In addition to the school website, many teachers have a class website listing assignments and homework, supplies required and contact information. Besides the traditional newsletters, phone calls, parent/teacher meetings and report cards, Oak Street also communicates with parents/guardians via email.

Enjoying Michigans at the Oak Street Open House



PBIS not just for students!

All Plattsburgh City schools have implemented the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) program for several years. It establishes specific behavioral expectations for students, both in school and at home, using the 3 Bees: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe.

With the goal of building a positive community, Oak Street Elementary has taken this program one step further, and has set behavioral expectations for its staff members and has suggested PBIS participation for parents/guardians. Staff and parents/guardians are expected to be positive role models for students and be enthusiastic partners in implementing the PBIS model in school and at home.

Examples of the behavior matrix for students, staff and parents/guardians are available on the school website.

Plattsburgh High School

College 101 for Parents

In addition to individual meetings between students and their counselors, parents of graduating seniors had an opportunity to attend an evening session on how to conduct a college search, finding and securing financial aid and were guided through the college application process.

The counselors compared the process of selecting a college for one's child to purchasing a home, since they are, in fact, choosing their child's next home for four years. They suggested setting up a grid of the top 10 things parents and students are looking for in a college, and rate each potential college on these parameters. Parents and students were encouraged to take a tour and to meet with an admissions counselor at colleges on their list.

PHS counselors also took them through the application process. The counseling office acts as the central clearinghouse for PHS student college

applications, ensuring that all letters of recommendation, transcripts, essays, SAT/ACT scores and other materials accompany a correctly completed application form. This helps avoid delays and questions from colleges requesting missing information. Counselors can also keep track of what was sent to which colleges.

Parents were encouraged to have a meaningful discussion with their children regarding the cost of college and how to pay for it.



College counseling for the whole family

Orientation for Everyone

The School Counseling Office held orientation sessions for the families of incoming freshmen and transfer students entering Plattsburgh High School for the first time.

This year, counselors held 2 sessions: a morning session for students and an evening session for parents and guardians, to allow more of them to be able to attend.

The morning student session began with a welcome from Principal Mr. Fairchild, who addressed the transition from middle school to high school, covering topics such as school rules and regulations, including the school dress code. To be sure there would be no question regarding proper school attire, current PHS students put on a fashion show highlighting acceptable clothing.

More than 80 PHS students, peer mentors and National Honor Society members, addressed the 123 incoming students in attendance, discussing student clubs, life at PHS and other items of interest. Afterwards, the new students received their 2008-09 schedules from the counselors and got a tour of the building from current PHS students.

At the evening session for parents, the focus was on parental concerns and the school's expectations. The counselors addressed common concerns that parents may have about the transition to high school, how to identify a problem in their child's behavior or schoolwork and whom to contact to deal with it. Mr. Fairchild and Mr. Hurlock outlined the school's behavioral and academic expectations.

Momot Elementary

Tips for Parents

Improving Reading Skills

1. Set aside a regular time to read to your children every day. Reading aloud to children will significantly improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary.
2. Surround your children with reading material. Children with a large supply of reading materials score higher on tests.
3. Have a family reading time. Establish a daily 15 to 30 minute time when everybody in the family reads. Seeing you read will inspire your children to read.

Improving Math Skills

1. Make sure your children understand mathematical concepts. Otherwise math becomes a meaningless mental exercise of memorizing rules.
2. Help them master basic facts. Use flash cards to help your children learn basic facts; ideally, they should be able to give an answer in less than three seconds.
3. Teach them to write their numbers neatly: 25% of all errors in solving math problems are due to sloppy number writing.

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Curriculum Information Night

In September, teachers at Momot held evening meetings with parents and guardians to explain their academic plan for the year and to go over school policies and procedures.

At the 4th grade meeting, for example, teachers discussed how they plan to teach the core subjects – reading, writing, math, social studies and science – giving parents an overview of the curriculum as well as tips on helping their child succeed. This helps parents understand what and how students are learning, which may not be the same method as in their own elementary experience.

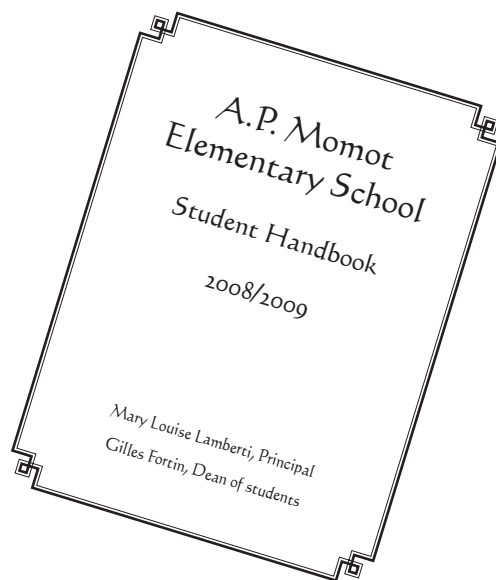
Parents were also told about the Enrichment Program (Odyssey, chorus and string lessons), special education, counseling services, speech/physical/occupational therapies and AIS. Teachers familiarized parents with classroom procedures and policies covering everything from student birthdays to testing to snacks, so that they know what to expect from different situations that may come up during the school year.

Parents were also encouraged to ask questions, and those in attendance were most interested in learning about the school's academic expectations for their fourth graders and how to help them with homework and studying. Their tips for parents are reproduced in this newsletter. Teacher email addresses and phone numbers were also distributed to parents for questions that may arise during the school year.

Student Handbook

As part of its commitment to keep in contact with parents and guardians, Momot sends home a student handbook at the beginning of every year. This handbook contains virtually all of the school information that families may need throughout the year, listing the calendar, faculty and staff, and school hours. It also contains contact information for the principal, dean of students, health office, PTO, School Improvement Planning Team, 21st Century Community Learning Center, and the Pre-K program.

The handbook covers all school policies and procedures such as safety, attendance, academic programs, anti-bullying policy, recess, and explains PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports).



This comprehensive document also encourages parents and guardians to get more involved in their child's education and school.

PTO Brings Parents to School

The Momot Parent-Teacher Organization is extremely active in both fund-raising and organizing events. Each classroom has a PTO volunteer “Room Parent” who helps plan events and disseminates information to the parents of students in the class.

Over the past few years, the Momot PTO has raised more than \$25,000 to support school activities and purchase equipment for classrooms. For example, the PTO purchased 5 SMARTBoards for Momot classrooms last year, and has purchased playground equipment, digital cameras and a sound system for the gym.

They also augment existing field trips for each class with the goal of taking a trip early in the year and integrating it with each class’s curriculum. One class went to Parc Safari, and the teachers linked it to science and reading lessons.

Finally, the PTO organizes family-oriented special events throughout the year, such as Open House, Holiday Decorating Night, book fairs and Family Fun Night.



Families created holiday decorations during a PTO-sponsored event.

Science Fair



More Parents Tips

Encouraging Writing

1. Coach – don’t write it for them. Students need to do their own drafting, revising and editing.
2. Look first for what is done well in the writing and offer praise. Children need encouragement to be successful.
3. Focus on ideas first. Save editing until the ideas are clear, complete and focused.

Stafford Middle School

FSO Gives Parents School Connections

The Family-School Organization exemplifies the strength of the home-school connection at Stafford Middle School. Parent volunteers meet the first Wednesday of every month to plan special events at the school and to coordinate fund-raising.

Once such event sponsored by the FSO was the recent Open House. This year parents and guardians picked up their child's schedule and followed it, moving from classroom to classroom meeting the teachers and getting a feel for student life at SMS.

The Stafford FSO also sponsors 6th grade orientation, the spring Book Fair, June Jubilee and the 8th grade dance. Through its fund-raising activities, it provides additional funds for student field trips, purchases curriculum based materials as per teacher requests, and promotes fitness and good nutrition habits.



The Stafford FSO gave students healthy snacks at the open house.

Service Not Just for Students

Student Advocate Janet Hankins believes in establishing positive contact with parents and guardians. She wants their first meeting to be a positive one, and tries to introduce herself to them whenever possible to establish a personal relationship. That way, any subsequent phone calls that may be necessary will be coming from someone they have met, and not from a stranger. She also keeps in touch with parents and guardians via email.

Referrals to the student advocate come from a variety of sources including parents/guardians, neighbors, teachers, or through meeting with students. Depending on the needs of the individual student, the student advocate puts the family in contact with the appropriate outside agency.

The entire student services staff was on hand at the 6th grade orientation to meet with parents/guardians to explain their services, answer questions and make those valuable personal connections.

Services provided through the Guidance Office include helping students with personal problems such as cyber-bullying, friendship issues and problems at home. They also work with students to develop their career interests, helping them to connect their personal interests to possible career paths. Students can then see the link between education and a fulfilling future career.

E-mail goes Global

The Stafford Global Team has instituted an email list to update parents and guardians (some students choose to receive it, too) with an overview of what's happening on the team that week. Topics include general information about their units of study, announcements of tests and quizzes, study tips, information about special activities like field trips and author visits, and website links that they recommend for research and enrichment activities.

At the end of each Monday's email, they list the homework assignments due that week, which allows families and students to practice effective

time management skills, especially helpful to those juggling academics with extracurricular activities. Parents who do not have email at home are welcome to stop by the office any day during the week to pick up a printed copy of the update.

Parents love this for many reasons. It allows them a glimpse into their child's classrooms, and many find they're able to have more meaningful school-home conversations at the dinner table. It also allows them to check in with students to make sure they're on track with homework assignments, tests, and quizzes.

Communication: The Cornerstone of the Home-School Relationship

The faculty and administration of Stafford are committed to keeping in contact with the parents and guardians of their students. The SMS monthly parent newsletter is mailed home and is available on the website. This newsletter is a source of important information about the school and brings home points of interest to the Stafford community: scheduling, procedures, upcoming deadlines, current classroom projects, student drama and concert performance announcements. In short, it is all the news that's fit to print.

Other points of home contact include interim report cards and the Report Card Night / parent-teacher conference in November. Parents and guardians come into the school, meet their child's teacher(s) and have an opportunity to discuss his/her progress in school and any other concerns they may have.

Bailey Avenue Elementary

Sending the Message Home

Each teacher at Bailey Avenue Elementary sends home a weekly parent letter to inform parents and guardians about upcoming classroom events, give study tips and homework help. It may also discuss health issues such as eating healthy snacks, or reminding parents that students who get a good night's sleep arrive in class ready to learn. Often, teachers will send out a call for volunteers to help in the classroom with special events.

The Bailey Beargram newsletter, published twice each month, addresses current and upcoming school-wide events and celebrations, for example, recognizing students that have met their reading goal. It also informs families about student drop-off and pick-up procedures, safety issues, parent luncheons and other activities.

Approximately 100 parents/guardians have signed up for Principal Mrs. Thompson's weekly Bearmail email newsletter, which goes out every Friday. It is a concise listing of the week's events, and parents have said that they tape it to the fridge to remind them of what is happening at school.

Caught being good

Bailey Ave. publishes a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) handbook that is given to parents so that they are aware of and understand this program that seeks to promote good behavioral habits in students both in school and at home. PBIS behavioral expectations are organized around the "4 Bees" – Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Cooperative and Be Responsible. Bailey Avenue also asks parents to inform the school when their child is "caught displaying good behavior." This good news is celebrated on the daily announcements, making the connection between school and home.



says

Be Safe

Be Respectful

Be Cooperative

&

Be Responsible

Pulse of Plattsburgh City Schools

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