

Westerly Creek Elementary School Newsletter

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Jill A. Corcoran, Principal



Contents

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Principal's News | 1 |
| ECE News | 2 |
| Kindergarten News | 2 |
| First Grade News | 3 |
| Second Grade News | 3 |
| GT News | 3 |
| Reading Takes You Places | 4 |
| Upcoming Events | 4 |
| From Ms. Capps | 4 |
| PTA President News | 5 |
| We're Committed to Education | 6 |
| Art at WCE | 7 |
| CSC Update | 8 |
| Notes from Mrs. Hill | 8 |

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Principal's News

Dear Westerly Creek Families:

January 7th was our first day back with students. I can't tell you how many times I heard how excited the kids were to be back in school. I had one child stop me in the hall and ask why we have to have such a long winter break. Another student told me they really missed reading with their friends. It is great to know that we have created an environment where students want to be.

2nd Grade Benchmark Testing

Our second graders participated in the second round of Benchmark testing before winter break. The Benchmarks are designed to give us data showing how our students are progressing throughout the school year. Once again our data is very promising. Students scored 49 % proficient or advanced in writing and 87% proficient or advanced in math. A reading test was not administered in the second round. The second grade teachers will use the data to help make informed decisions in the delivery of the curriculum. We will administer a third round of testing late spring.

ECE and Kindergarten Applications

All current ECE students will need to reapply if they plan on attending the program again next year. All ECE students that are advancing to Kindergarten will also need to submit an application. Our preschool and Kindergarten programs foster knowledge, self-esteem, social skills and a life-long love of learning. Full and partial scholarships are available. Applications are available through January 30th in the front office. Apply early! Spots are limited!

Kaleidoscope Corner

The Kaleidoscope Office has changes in Kaleidoscope Corner for the 2009-2010 School Year. Due to changes in licensing requirements for Center-Based licenses, they are no longer offering their programs for children who are 3 years

old. The new changes by licensing would cause a financial hardship as well as a staffing challenge to Kaleidoscope Corner. They will continue services to children 4 - 12 years old under a School-Age license. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Kathy Cruz, Dept. of Extended Learning, 720.424.8259 or email Kaleidoscope.dpsk12.org.

Drop Off

We ask that parents work hard to ensure that students are in school on time. As you know, students can enter the building at 8:45 and will need to be in class by 9:00. With current weather issues that we are confronting over the next few months, it can be a challenge. You will want to leave a few minutes earlier to avoid traffic issues due to these inclement conditions.

Supervision begins at 8:45. If it is an outside day we will provide supervision on the blacktop and if it is an inside day we will provide supervision in the library until the first bell rings. We want our children to be safe and secure when they arrive at school in the morning.

Library

The library could use some extra help. Any parent or grandparent that is interested in volunteering an hour or two a week to help shelve books, check out books or read to classes would be greatly appreciated. If interested please contact Laura Ramsey, lauracramsey@hotmail.com.

Thanks for your continued support. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached by phone 303.322.5877; email jill_corcoran@dpsk12.org; or just stop in!

Warm Regards,
Ms. Corcoran

Heard in the Halls

During character ed:

"Why do we have manners?"

Heavy sigh, "cause it just makes the world a nicer place."

I asked a student if she wanted her full name or her nickname on our birthday chart.

She said, "Whatever you're more comfortable with."

A teacher was trying to get the kids to add more detail to their stories so she told them to put some "meat on the bones."

One student replied, "But I'm a vegetarian."

"I really want a Wii. I think I have enough money in my college fund to cover it."

ECE News

During the month of February the ECE students will be learning about farms.

In math we will focus on operations using manipulatives to add and take away.

We will also have many celebrations in February including 100th day, President's Day, and Valentine's Day.

Please remember, there is no school on February 9. We will have a parent meeting that day with the Denver Art Museum at 9:15 am. Child care will be provided.

If you have any questions please let us know. Thanks for everything. Kayla, Cindy, and Casey

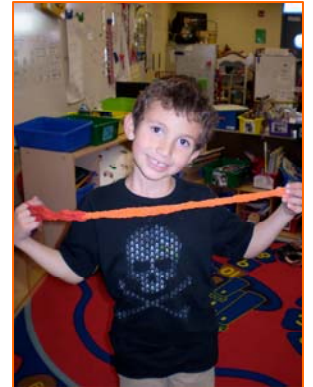
Kindergarten News

In Writer's Workshop we're learning about personal narratives and how to create them ourselves.

We've been studying Ezra Jack Keats and using his stories about Peter and his friends as examples.

In Math, we're learning the plus and minus symbols and how to use them in number stories. We're also continuing to explore math concepts through center games.

We're looking forward to celebrating Pajama Day at the end of January and 100s day at the beginning of February.



Ethan is eating his lollipop after a trip to Hammonds Candy Factory.

Mateo is holding up a finger weaving that he made during centers' time. Finger weaving is a complex procedure for the kids to learn and requires concentration, eye hand coordination, and perseverance, all traits needed for school success. They are making hair ties, necklaces, belts, key chains and anything else they can imagine!



2nd Grade Holiday Musical



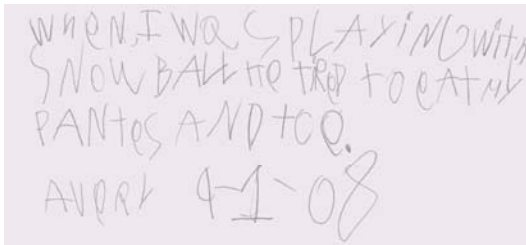
First Grade News



All three First Grade classes celebrated the end of their *Small Moments Unit* with a publishing party.

They are now working on their *How-To Unit*. Check out "How to Make a Mask" project in the hallway outside of the classrooms.

Second Grade News



The Second Graders are taking care of their class pet, Snowball.

Avery Dell with Snowball

GT Update

For those of you that don't know me, my name is Ashley McCollum and I am the new GT Teacher at Westerly Creek. My own children attend WC and I have been so impressed with the quality of their education, and I am very excited to join such an exceptional group of educators.

In our small groups, we are starting our unit on Dr. Seuss. I am very eager to begin this unit because I enjoy reading the works of Dr. Seuss as much as the students do! His work really lends itself to higher level thinking activities because he leaves us with so many open-ended questions. We will learn about Dr. Seuss himself, as well as work on analyzing many of his books and stories. We will culminate our unit by

creating our own "Seussville" with found objects in our homes.

I will also begin working with Junior Great Books with small groups. In this process, we read classic stories and then discuss them using the "Shared Inquiry" approach. The stories we read are specifically chosen because they can be interpreted several different ways. This will allow students to come up with what they think a story means and then have the opportunity to discuss their ideas with other students who may have a different interpretation.

I have really enjoyed getting to know my students in the brief time that I have had with them so far, and I am looking forward to many fun activities throughout the rest of the school year.

Reading Takes You Places

Reading is Fundamental is a federally sponsored program that provides free books to school-aged children. Schools participating in RIF are required to hold three book distributions during the school year and each distribution must include a "motivational activity." This year, the RIF committee decided to celebrate with the theme "Reading Takes You Places."

Our December distribution was "Out of This World" and we asked students to don an outer-space hairdo or hat. The best hairdo/hat in each class received an additional free RIF book. We decorated the Library with planets and stars and even led the kids out through the "space pod." We had so much fun!

Our February 6th RIF day will be "To a Foreign Land" and we will be celebrating the Chinese New Year. The final RIF day will be on April 3rd and will be "Back in Time."

RIF FAQs:

When was RIF founded? In 1966, former teacher Margaret McNamara brought a bag of used books to four boys in Washington, D.C., whom she tutored in reading. When she told the children they could each pick out a book to keep, their astonishment and delight led her to discover that these children, and many of their classmates, had never owned any books.

By that summer, Mrs. McNamara had gathered a group of school volunteers, and on November 3, 1966, they launched the book distribution and reading motivation program they called Reading Is Fundamental.

How is RIF Funded? RIF programs are funded through the generous support of countless individuals, community organizations, foundations, corporations and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Westerly Creek RIF receives 75% of its funds from the RIF program. The other 25% is generously provided by the Westerly Creek PTA.

Why can't RIF Books go to the Westerly Creek Library? Because RIF is a federal program, there are strict guidelines about how the program must be run, how the children choose their books, and where those books end up. Children must be able to pick out any book they want with no assistance from teachers, volunteers or parents. RIF books are for the students only. They cannot be given to classrooms or school libraries.

Who chooses the RIF books that are offered? A committee of three people decides which books to order. This year the committee consisted of Jon Thumim, Emily Kosakowski and Ansley Young.



From Ms. Capps...

Rachel's Challenge Update: The teachers and staff were introduced to Rachel's challenge before the holidays and are excited to get involved in this wonderful program. Right now we are settling on a kick off date with an assembly and school roll out. Please be sure to check the blog www.westerlycreek.blogspot.com for weekly updates as we get Rachel's challenge implemented.

Nuggets: Mark Randall, former Denver Nuggets player, will be coming to Westerly Creek along with some other former teammates. Right now we are negotiating dates (shooting for March) and will keep you up to date on this exciting event!

As always, if you or your family finds yourself in need of assistance, a friendly ear, or support in any way please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here Tuesdays and Fridays and my new Westerly Creek phone # is 720-424-3202.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Late Start February 12
- ◆ No School February 16-17
- ◆ First Grade Music Program March 18
- ◆ Spring Break March 23-27
- ◆ Westerly Creek R.E.D - Reaching Educational Dreams Auction April 18
- ◆ Baby and Kid Stuff Sale April 25

PTA News

A Time to Serve

In light of this time of year and the recent inauguration; I would like to remind you that President Obama is urging us all to serve our community, and we have an opportunity for you! It just so happens it is our own Election time- and as they say... WE NEED YOU!!!

A few questions have come up about the difference between elected positions and other chair positions, which I will try to explain. The PTA Executive Board consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Principal. The Board consists of these along with the standing committees, a Teacher Representative and Past President. The Standing Committees are Membership, Fundraising, Staff Support and Communications. These committees are "standing"; in other words, we will always need these committees. All of the other committees are considered "special"; the need for these committees may come and go, or perhaps change. The special committee chairs are appointed by the Board. These are the positions that we seek volunteers for, we typically address these positions during the summer. However, we are always looking for volunteers, so if you feel the call, don't hesitate to call!

This will be my last year to serve as the President of the WCE PTA. Karla Rehring our current Vice President has offered to serve as President next year, I am confident that she will be elected and will serve the PTA well.

That leaves us needing a Vice President nominee. While there is no requirement to serve more than one year, our hope is that the new Vice President will serve one year as VP, one year as President and the third and final year in a limited capacity as Past President. This is the position that I look forward to serving in next year.

There are two additional board positions needing to be filled. We are in need of a Treasurer. An accounting degree is certainly not required but a level of comfort with numbers is a bonus. The position of Secretary is also open.

In terms of Standing Committees, we are looking for a co-chair for the Fundraising Committee. This person will be working with Krista Azer the current Fundraising Chair. Krista is a delight to work with and is full of great ideas. We recognize that Fundraising is a big job and it seems that dividing the workload is a good idea. We will also be electing a new Membership Chair; Cindy Grischo has agreed to be the nominee for this position.

The nomination committee needs to announce the nominees by February 11, 2009. Elections will be held at the March meeting. If you have questions about the positions or would like to volunteer, please contact Jodi Maturo, maturofamily@msn.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely yours,
Tina Turner
President, Westerly Creek PTA



Lost and Found

Please check the lost and found area that is located underneath the stairwell in the main lobby. We have so many beautiful items; I can't believe they are not missed. Also, please put your child's name on coats, mittens, gloves, lunchboxes and water bottles. We will be donating all unclaimed items to a local charity.

Street Parking

Please know that street parking is limited around WCE. The space directly in front of the cafeteria is zoned for school bus loading and unloading. In recent weeks, the bus has had great difficulty parking to pick up our students at dismissal time because cars are parking in the lane that is reserved for buses. Please know this puts our students in danger when the bus is not parked in the appropriate space that has been designated. Help us keep the area free of cars.

We're Committed to Education!

As parents of a Westerly Creek Elementary student, you can feel proud of the education your child receives here. This year alone, students appear to have made great progress in their test scores and WCE leadership is already planning for the next school year.

"Research consistently tells us that one of the easiest ways to help younger children learn is to improve student to teacher ratios," reports Principal Jill Corcoran. This year WCE students have all benefited from having an extra teaching aid, typically referred to as a paraprofessional, in their classroom. However, significant fundraising is still necessary to ensure we can continue giving Westerly Creek students the advantage of lower student to teacher ratios.

"What many people don't realize is that we need to secure the funding before we can hire additional educators," explains Fundraising Chair, Krista Azer. "Unfortunately funding for paraprofessionals is not the only area where we're short.

Our PTA has committed to raising money to fund the Arts Program, library books and computers, among many other things our children need." That's why the PTA is now planning the biggest fundraising event of the year.

The build-up to the annual WCE Auction is now in full swing. While the big event is not scheduled until April 18, the preparation process begins months in advance. "This year we need every parent to contribute in some way, no matter how small. Think about your network of family, friends and neighbors. Who do you know that might be able to donate a product or service to the auction list?" suggests Azer.

The team is looking for all kinds of auction items, from restaurant and

spa gift certificates to landscaping services and photography sessions, in any and all denominations. Despite having a volunteer acquisition team, most of the auction items at this annual event come through parent networking.

In prior years some Westerly Creek parents have gotten very creative in their auction donations. "We had one parent who found a great deal on a new kid's bike at a local store and bought it for the school auction," remarks Azer. "There's another individual who donates a complimentary weekend at her mountain resort every year. It's a heavily bid item at the auction, yet it doesn't cost her a thing."

Other parents have utilized their home business or service as a donation, turning their skill sets into an opportunity to earn a new client.

Auction donations aren't the only way parents can get involved. There's still a need for volunteers in the acquisition of sponsors, event planning, communications and more. Parents can choose to take on a small job for just a couple of hours or sign-on for a bigger task. Anyone interested in helping organize the event or wishing to contribute an auction item should email Janet Chrisbens at janet@4saleindenver.com.

Of course all parents should plan to attend the auction April 18! Stay tuned for more details on this exciting event to come from your classroom.

Direct Giving Campaign Mid-Year Update... WCE has received \$40,000 in Direct Giving donations from about 30% of the school's families.

The suggested contribution is \$400 per child, but any donation amount would be appreciated (Grandparents and Company Match Programs are options too).

Please remember that this campaign exists to make WCE a top notch DPS school and that these funds will be used to pay for full time paraprofessionals in every classroom, an art program in the school, library/classroom resources and new computers.

You can write a check to Westerly Creek PTA or there is a Pledge button on the PTA website where you can make a one time gift or a monthly or quarterly donation on your credit card.



Get to know Miss Melinda

Miss Melinda, Melinda Stewart, is developing our Kindergarten, First and Second Grade children’s creative abilities as the new art teacher at Westerly Creek. Stewart’s position is made possible through the efforts and money of the WCE PTA.

More about Miss Melinda, in her own words....

I was born in Alaska and lived in Kansas and Georgia while I was growing up and in Seattle, New Orleans and Colorado (Denver & Creede) since achieving adulthood. I would call Kansas home and still have quite a bit of extended family that lives there. I am the second oldest of six children and am quite close to my siblings even though we live all over the US. I am single and do not have any children of my own.

I graduated from the University of Kansas in December of 2006 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Since graduating I have been teaching various media; ceramics, sculpture and collage, to a variety of age groups at a community art center located in Park Hill called The Art Garage.

The Art Garage was opened in June of 2007 by Barb McKee, a local Park Hill artist and parent who felt like the community needed this creative resource. In addition to offering art classes for children and adults the space also houses a public art business, Surface Strategy, owned by McKee. I am a contract bas-relief carver for Surface Strategy and have learned an immense amount about public art in this position.

My paternal grandmother is an artist and I have fond memories of spending summers collecting objects to collage into fantastical worlds with her. My creativity and love of expression through art was always encouraged through out my life. I feel this is one of the most important things you can offer children in art. If they are enjoying the process of what they are creating they will not only acquire the skill they are being exposed to but intrinsically add the form of expression into their vocabulary of interpreting the world.



Stewart’s Cast Iron Heart

The projects the students and I will be working on in the spring semester include exploring color theory, integrating multiple forms of expression into art and we will be spending a month on three-dimensional clay art making.

I would also like to collaborate with the Westerly Creek community to create a permanent piece of art that reflects the spirit of this community.

I'd like to thank the PTA for supporting the Arts in Westerly Creek and recognizing the importance of a well-rounded education.



Art Class



Public Art Project in Ft. Collins



Backdrop at performance



2nd Graders create backdrop for Musical

What's Up with the Third Elementary School in Stapleton?

By Chet Seward, Chair, WCE Collaborative School Committee

A hot topic during the last few Collaborative School Committee (CSC) meetings has been deciding how to meet Westerly Creek's growing space needs. A lot of hard work by our students, teachers, staff and families, along with the broader success of Stapleton, has driven demand for great community schools like WCE. As a result we may run out of classroom space in our school two years before Westerly Creek is completely built out through grade five. Stapleton had planned to have a third elementary school by 2011, but the uncertain economic times have forced some changes to that planning.

Here is what we know:

- ✓ The current downturn in the economy and its effect on housing construction has cooled revenue streams for the previously planned third K-8 school in Stapleton.
- ✓ Plans for the third school had it located at 26th and Lola, however the land at that site is dirty and DIA, which is responsible for remediation activities, is also having problems coming up necessary funding to clean the area.
- ✓ Building the third school as was originally planned is therefore not an option for the immediate future.

So what's next and what is WCE doing to address this pressing issue?

We have met with Denver Public Schools (DPS) and Stapleton leaders to discuss plans for ensuring there is enough space for all of Stapleton's children to attend school in their neighborhood if they choose to do so. Jill Corcoran has been a stalwart champion for our school. DPS is very interested in developing an alternative plan and we have committed to working with them, our sister schools Bill Roberts and Odyssey, and Forest City to devise a solution to our growing community's education needs. That process starts with the soon to be released student population projections from DPS. Once we receive the latest numbers next month the WCE CSC will initiate a broad-based process to gather your feedback on possible alternatives moving forward.

We need your help! Stay tuned and be ready to share your thoughts and help us once again demonstrate how our school community is living out the dream that was envisioned when Denver gave the old airport a new lease on life. Thank you in advance for keeping an open mind as we work together for the best of our children.

As always, I encourage you to attend our meetings, which are held at 6:30 in the school library on the first Tuesday of every month. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My email address is chetseward@comcast.net.

Notes from Mrs. Hill



Hurrah! I have a music room! It is #211, just down the hall from the room that I shared with Melinda, our art teacher, while DSST was here. It is truly wonderful to have all the space we need to move around and dance and sing, sing, sing.

We started focusing on a new word this month. It is *melody*. One kindergarten boy asked if we would have another new word the next time I moved into a different room. NO! But we are having fun seeing how melodies move up and down. We even have a body scale so we can observe the movement of scales and tunes.

The First Graders are ready to begin learning the songs for their show! It is called CELEBRATE! The performance is scheduled for March 18. It's all about positive self esteem. The story goes that there is a contest at the Community Center to see who the top Esteem Team is. So some and see what constructive aspect of valuing ourselves is best. Yeah!

Stop by anytime and sing with us!

Judy Hill