

Haddam Elementary School Dolphin Times

OCTOBER, 2009



DR. JANICE HARRIS PRINCIPAL

NOTES FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents,

We had a terrific September! Many of you commented on how much you enjoyed the Open House on September 22nd. There was a feeling of calm and community that was quite evident throughout the evening. Our Kindergarten Ringing-In was also very successful. By doing this event just a week later than usual, we were able to have a lot of brave bell-ringers (and no crying Kindergartners☺). Thanks to staff and families for supporting these events for the benefit of all our students.

At the Open House, I introduced our new October event. I would like to thank those who have since expressed your thoughts (either at the last PTO meeting or via email) about us maintaining a Halloween parade. I think it helped me to understand how much that tradition is valued as a part of the larger community. I am happy to share that this tradition will not only be maintained, but improved under the leadership of parent volunteers. As I suggested at the last PTO meeting, we will be able to accomplish more as a school community with parent leadership and assistance. Parent volunteer Kristy Marinaro has agreed to organize a Halloween parade on Thursday, October 29th at 6:00p.m. Students will meet in the HES gym at 5:45pm to line up for the parade. Kristy and other volunteers (please let her know if you can help) will map out a parade route on the school campus and the students will parade in costume by grade. The parade is scheduled to wrap up between 6:20 and 6:30pm and students will be given a small snack or treat at the end. Having this event in the evening will allow more parents to be in attendance without having to take an afternoon off from work. This will also eliminate the concerns that come from having this event as part of the school day. (Kristy Marinaro can be reached at: fkmarin@aol.com or 860-345-7442.) More details are forthcoming.

The decision to implement new family events this year was a staff decision supported through discussion and feedback at the School Advisory Team meetings. Those events can be found on the HES website under special activities. In addition to family events, this year, the staff has decided that a student event, Fall Fun Friday, would serve as a great opportunity for parents to volunteer. Parents will help us provide fun activities for students to engage in. We have gotten many volunteers who are willing to run a craft or activity, assist with a craft or activity, and/or donate materials. (We will be contacting volunteers by the end of this week to confirm.) The Fall Fun Friday organizers are Denise Buckley (staff member) and Katie Bodak (parent). We hope that our students will come dressed in the fall color for their grade on Friday, October 30th. We will take pictures during a brief morning assembly that we have planned to thank Matt Gyorog (parent of a 2nd grader) for running "Across the State [of Connecticut] for Music's Sake" and raising enough money to purchase an electronic piano for our school! In the afternoon, students will head to the gym, by grade level, where they will have a chance to do craft and/or activity stations. Immediately after that, they will have a snack and, weather permitting, an extra outdoor recess.

We look forward to having a wonderful October filled with other fun activities such as the HES Hoe Down and the annual fall Book Fair. I also encourage you to sign up for conferences with your child's teacher. Enjoy the rest of the month!



Helping Your Child With Homework (Part 2): Providing Guidance

Taken from the U.S. Dept. Of Education publication *Helping Your Child with Homework*:
<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/index.html>

The basic rule is, "Don't do the assignments yourself." It's not your homework—it's your child's. "I've had kids hand in homework that's in their parents' handwriting," one eighth-grade teacher complains. Doing assignments for your child won't help him understand and use information. And it won't help him become confident in his own abilities.

Here are some ways that you can provide guidance without taking over your child's homework.

Help Your Child Get Organized

Help your child to make a schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often. Writing out assignments will get him used to the idea of keeping track of what's due and when. If your child is not yet able to write, write it for him until he can do it himself.

A book bag or backpack will make it easier for your child to carry homework to and from school. Providing homework folders in which your child can tuck his assignments for safekeeping also can help him to stay organized.

Encourage Good Study Habits

Teachers generally give students tips on how to study. But it takes time and practice to develop good study habits. To reinforce good habits at home, you can:

Help your child manage time to complete assignments. For example, if your eighth grader has a biology report due in three weeks, discuss all the steps she needs to take to complete it on time, including:

1. selecting a topic;
2. doing the research by looking up books and other materials on the topic and taking notes;
3. figuring out what questions to discuss;
4. drafting an outline;
5. writing a rough draft; and
6. revising and completing the final draft.

Encourage your child to make a chart that shows how much time she expects to spend on each step.

Help your child to get started when he has to do research reports or other big assignments. Encourage him to use the library. If he isn't sure where to begin, tell him to ask the librarian for suggestions. If he's using a computer for online reference resources—whether the computer is at home, school or the library—make sure he's getting whatever help he needs to use it properly and to find age-appropriate Web sites. Many public libraries have homework centers with tutors or other kinds of one-on-one assistance. After your child has completed the research, listen as he tells you the points he wants to make in the report.

Give practice tests. Help your third grader prepare for a spelling test by saying the words as she writes them. Have her correct her own test as you spell each word.

Help your child avoid last-minute cramming. Review with your fifth grader how and what to study for his social studies test long before it's to be given. You can have him work out a schedule of what he needs to do to, make up a practice test and write down answers to the questions he's made up.

Talk with your child about how to take a test. Be sure she understands how important it is to read the instructions carefully, to keep track of the time and to avoid spending too much time on any one question. (See the [Resources](#) section for the titles of books and pamphlets that give more tips on how your child can get organized and develop good study habits.)

Talk about the Assignments

Talking and asking questions can help your child to think through an assignment and break it down into small, manageable parts. Here are some questions to ask.

Do you understand what you're supposed to do? After your child has read the instructions, ask her to tell you in her own words what the assignment is about. (If she can't read yet, the teacher may have sent home instructions that you can read to her.) Some schools have homework hotlines that you can call or Web sites that you can access

by computer for assignments in case your child misplaced a paper or was absent on the day it was given. If your child doesn't understand the instructions, read them with her and talk about the assignment. Does it have words that she doesn't know? How can she find out what the words mean? If neither you nor your child understands an assignment, call one of her classmates or get in touch with the teacher.

Do you need help in understanding how to do this assignment? See if your child needs to learn more, for example, about subtracting fractions before she can do her assignment. Or find out if the teacher needs to explain to her again when to use different kinds of punctuation marks. If you understand the subject yourself, you may want to work through some examples with your child. However, always let her do the assignment herself.

Do you have everything you need to do the assignment? Sometimes your child needs special supplies, such as colored pencils, metric rulers, calculators, maps or reference books. Check with the teacher, school guidance counselor or principal for possible sources of assistance if you can't provide the needed supplies. Check with your local library or school library for books and other information resources.

Does your answer make sense to you? To check that your child understands what he is doing, ask him to explain how he solved a math problem or have him summarize what he has written in a report.

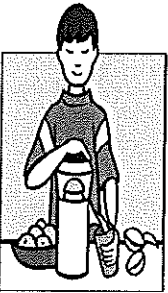
Watch for Frustration

If your child shows signs of frustration, let him take a break. Encourage him and let him see that you know he can do the work.

Give Praise

People of all ages respond to praise. And children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most—their families. "Good first draft of your book report!" or "You've done a great job" can go a long way toward motivating your child to complete assignments.

Children also need to know when they haven't done their best work. Make criticism constructive, however. Instead of telling a sixth grader, "You aren't going to hand in that mess, are you?" say, "The teacher will understand your ideas better if you use your best handwriting." Then give praise when the child finishes a neat version.



NEWS FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE

Now that winter is upon us, kids are coming more and more to the office with complaints of cough and dry lips. I wanted to let you know that I have cough drops here in the office, and can give them to your child with your permission **only**. You need to send in a note with cough drops to say your child may have them. If your child requests a cough drop during the school day, and I don't have a note from you, I will call you for permission for them to take it. You may bring your own supply of cough drops to my office and I will be happy to keep them here for your child. I want you to know that your child **cannot** keep a package of cough drops with them in class. Your child must come to my office to get a cough drop so I can monitor how many they are taking them, and assess if something more serious might be going on. Also, every Monday — no matter how many days your child had been taking cough drops the week before — I will need a permission note from you to let your child continue taking cough drops that week. I appreciate your attention to this matter.

As for the concern for dry lips, children should bring their own chap stick to school to keep with them in class. I am happy to give them chap stick here in the office when necessary, but having their own means they are not out of class as often.

If your child is running a fever, having diarrhea, or vomiting, we ask that you keep them home until they are free of these problems for **24 hours**. The district wide policy is that any fever 100 or greater, the child **MUST** be out of school until he/she has been fever free. We ask that you respect the other children and staff at this school if your child is not well, and keep your child at home to rest. We want your child to be at his or her best while they are at school so that they can learn at their full potential. If you ever have a question about your child's return to school after an illness, you may call me at any time in the health office and we can discuss it further. Each situation is unique and worth discussing at any time.

Please send your child with a water bottle to school each day. The water bottles are allowed to be used in class and this will help keep your child as well. Our building is very dry, so the water will help keep your kids hydrated and help decrease headaches and stomachaches. Please make sure your child also eats a healthy breakfast before coming to school. I have many children who come to my office midway through the morning with stomach aches who tell me they have not had breakfast. It is hard to learn on an empty stomach.

My door is always open for comments, suggestions, and questions. Feel free to call or come by any time!

Thank you,

Jennifer Pletcher, RN

HES nurse



Groups for Children of Parental Divorce/Separation

Stacey Mahoney (School Counselor) would like to offer groups for children who have experienced a parental divorce/separation. Based upon the responses received, she hopes to put together groups throughout the year in grades 1-4. The groups will take place during a teacher designated time during the school day. They generally last 6-8 weeks, meeting once per week for approximately 30 minutes. If you believe your child would benefit from such a group and/or if you have any questions, feel free to contact Stacey Mahoney 345-4551 or via email MahoneyS55@rsd17.org. Thank You!



"Back to School, Back to Sleep"

The new school year is upon us. From bedtime battles to the misery of morning call, summertime sleep habits die hard. Late summer nights combined with early school start times, and the stresses of just being a kid, deprive our sleep behavior. It is an unrecognized epidemic.

From elementary school through high school and beyond, a great many of our children are chronically sleep-deprived. With more than two-thirds of elementary school-age children having some kind of sleep problem and most adolescents not getting enough sleep, many will struggle to meet the barrage of new challenges, demands, and emotions of a new school year.

It is not widely recognized and appreciated just how pervasive and critical quality sleep is for brain development and how it directly influences daytime functioning, performance, mood, and behavior. When was the last time your doctor asked about your child's sleep? Parents wouldn't think of letting their child skip meals or run into a busy street, but staying up late is very often of little concern. It shouldn't be.

More and more research studies demonstrate that daytime sleepiness from chronic sleep deprivation and poor-quality sleep has significant affects on daytime behavior as well as concentration, attention, and mood. Even 20 fewer minutes of needed sleep may significantly affect behavior in many areas.

Parents may overestimate the amount of sleep their child gets because we may be unaware of when our child actually falls asleep, as well as night awakenings. Research has shown that medical conditions may cause or contribute to sleep problems even when overt medical symptoms seem well controlled. For example, asymptomatic children with asthma may have poor sleep and daytime fatigue. Allergies may cause respiratory distress when sleeping. In one study, almost one-third of the children in elementary school reported significant body pains during the night, of which parents were largely unaware.

Sleep deprivation may present itself in many ways other than daytime sleepiness -- inattention, poor concentration, moodiness, behavioral problems, and poor academic performance and social skills, to name a few. With your child in school during the day and with after-school activities for many, it is critical to talk with teachers, coaches, etc. to see if your child is exhibiting any signs of sleep deprivation.

Teach your child good sleep habits, also known as "sleep hygiene." Establish sleep-healthy bedtimes, bedtime routines, habits, and diets. Identify and reduce as much daytime stress as possible. **Limit TV and other "screen time" (computers, video games), especially at bedtime, and do not put a TV in your child's bedroom; children with a TV in their room tend to go to bed later and get less sleep than those without, and those kids who get less sleep are more likely to spend two or more hours watching TV.**

TVs and Sleeping Problems

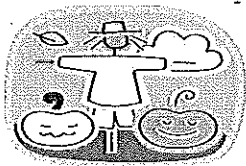
"A television in the child's bedroom ... was the most powerful predictor of overall sleep disturbance and bedtime resistance... followed by the amount of television viewed per day," wrote Judith Owens, MD, MPH, and her colleagues in an article published in the September issue of *Pediatrics*. They investigated the television viewing and sleep habits of 495 children in kindergarten through fourth grade and found that most TV-viewing practices were associated with at least one type of sleep disturbance, especially bedtime resistance, sleep onset delay, anxiety around sleep and shortened sleep duration.

"The presence of a television set in the child's bedroom may be a relatively under-recognized, but important, contributor to sleep problems in school children," they wrote. Televisions in the bedroom and caffeinated drinks are at least partly to blame for the typical child's lack of z's. According to the poll, over one-quarter of children age 3 and older slurp at least one caffeinated beverage a day, shaving about 3.5 hours of badly needed sleep from their weekly total; and four out of every 10 school-age kids can thank a television in their bedroom for two fewer hours of snoozing per week. Lack of sleep can sometimes show up as poor performance at school,

"School-age children who do not get enough sleep may see their grades drop," Lynn D'Andrea, MD, medical director of Pulmonary Services at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and chief of the Division of Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin said. "A child who is not getting enough sleep may have a shorter attention span, difficulty learning and an inability to concentrate. He or she also may miss more school because of illness." In addition, research has linked lack of sleep to physical inactivity, weight gain and other risky behaviors.

Follow these guidelines for your school age child to make sure they are getting enough sleep:

School-aged children (5 to 12 years)
Sleep needed: nine to 11 hours a night.



- Talk to your school-aged child about healthy sleep habits and why they are important.
- Enforce consistent sleep schedules and bedtime routines, even on weekends.
- Make your child's bedroom the best environment for sleep – dark, cool and quiet.
- Avoid having a TV or computer in your child's bedroom.
- Balance your child's schedule. Never let activities take the place of sleep.
- Teach your child to eat healthy and exercise regularly. Overweight children are at risk for sleep apnea, a serious sleep disorder.

DATES TO REMEMBER

OCTOBER 9 TH	HOE DOWN @ 5pm
OCTOBER 12	NO SCHOOL – COLUMBUS DAY
OCTOBER 13 & 14	EARLY DISMISSAL @ 1:05; PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES
OCTOBER 14	VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION – 9:00-9:30a.m.
OCTOBER 30	FUN FRIDAY – WEAR GRADE LEVEL FALL COLORS- AND DO FUN ACTIVITIES, 12:30-3PM

BOOK FAIR HOURS

TUES. OCT. 13	8 AM TO 7 PM
WEDNES. OCT. 14	7:30 AM TO 6PM
THURS. OCT. 15	7:30 AM TO 5 PM
FRI. OCT. 16	8 AM TO 12:30 PM

