



Gales Ferry /
Juliet W. Long School

December 2011

Dear Parents and Friends of GFS/JWL,

We will be introducing the Six Pillars of Character to students at the December All School Meeting. We will use the acronym **TRRFCC** "terrific" to help students remember that in order to be successful and productive students, they should be: Trustworthy, Respectful, Responsible, Fair, Caring, and Good Citizens. Each character trait is assigned a color designed to help students remember what the traits mean. During the month of December, we will focus on being caring. **Caring** is red so that we think of the heart. The All School Meeting, which is scheduled for December 9th at 2:00 P.M., will highlight ways that we can care for others. The Toys for Tots collection and the Mitten Tree are just two of the projects that are in the spotlight this month. As always, we continue to accept food and toiletry items for the Jaret Kulmann Food Locker. These projects provide students a meaningful way to show how much they care for others both in the school and community. All students, staff, and visitors attending the December All School Meeting are encouraged to wear red. We love to have visitors!

December may only have a few school days, but the calendar is full. Please note that December 23rd is a full day of school. We will host carolers from the high school in the morning and have a special afternoon assembly during which we will share the gift of song.

The staff and I would like to wish all of you a joyous holiday season!

Sincerely,

Anne Hogsten
Principal



Upcoming Events



December 1st and 2nd- Shortened Sessions for Parent/Teacher Conferences
December 2nd- Teacher and Staff Appreciation Lunch 1:00-2:00 P.M.
December 2nd- Roller Skating at Galaxy Roller Rink 5:00-7:00 P.M.
December 8th- All School Walk at 1:35 P.M.
December 9th- All School Meeting 2:00 P.M.
December 23rd- Full Day
December 24th - January 2nd- Winter Break
January 3rd- School Resumes

Ed Extras

Helpful information about learning brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorin Colorado, and LD OnLine

Mission Critical: Reading Together to Build Critical Thinking Skills

As parents, we hope to develop many positive skills and traits in our children. Critical thinking, the ability to think deeply about a topic or a book, is an essential skill for children to develop. Critical thinking doesn't develop overnight. It's something that develops and builds through conversations and experiences. It's also something parents can nurture by sharing quality books with their children.

Even though your elementary-aged child may now be able to read on their own, reading together remains just as important as it was when your child was younger. Family read-alouds provide great opportunities to tackle more challenging books together. These longer chapter books may have plots that are more complex and more demanding vocabulary. Working through these books chapter by chapter helps teach persistence. And by reading together, you are there as an important source of support and information.

Reading critically involves slowing down, and taking the time to help your child reflect on what you've just read. Depending on the book, discussions may involve talking about what a

character's actions tell us about his personality, or how the book's setting is important to the overall message. It might mean helping your child recognize something about the plot and the conflict that exists. It also means asking more open-ended questions to which there can be multiple correct answers.

Quality books enable you and your child to talk about the book in depth and with substance. All of this will help your reader develop critical thinking skills that will last a lifetime. Below are a few recommended titles, by grade level, that you and your growing reader may enjoy reading together and talking about.

Books for second and third grades

- *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, by Florence and Richard Atwater
- *Babe: The Gallant Pig*, by Dick King-Smith
- *Half Magic*, by Edward Eager
- *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster

Recommended titles are from *Deconstructing Penguins: Parents, Kids and the Bond of Reading*, by Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone (HarperCollins, 2005)

For more information, read **How to Increase Higher Order Thinking:** www.ReadingRockets.org/article/34655

Reading Rockets, Colorin Colorado, and LD OnLine are services of public television station WETA, Washington, D.C. Reading Rockets is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Colorin Colorado, a web service to help English language learners become better readers, receives major funding from the American Federation of Teachers. Additional funding is provided by the National Institute for Literacy and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. LD OnLine is the world's leading website on learning disabilities and ADHD, with major funding from Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes.

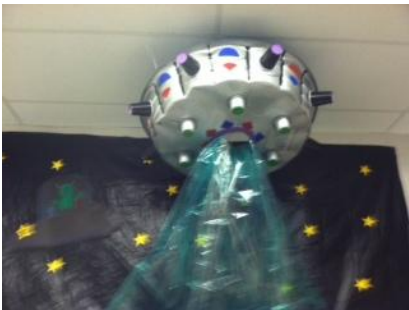


Mitten Tree



All classes will be reading or listening to The Mitten Tree by Candace Christiansen. During the month of December, students will be collecting mittens that will be displayed in the main lobby of GFS on our very own "Mitten Tree" prior to being donated to people in need.

Reading is out of this world!



The aliens have landed at GFS! Actually, the 2011 Scholastic Book Fair has "invaded" the gym so that students and families can enjoy browsing and buying books as well as other items. The last day to shop at the school is December 1st. The hours are from 9:00-7:00. If you are not able to visit the school, you may shop online by going to scholastic.com/schoolbookfairs. This link will be open through December 5th.



Safety Update



There is a new stop sign located in front of Gales Ferry School. It was placed there after many drivers failed to stop for school buses that were actively loading and unloading beyond the cement island. Hopefully, the sign will be a visual reminder for all of us to be extra cautious when driving around and near school buses and children.

Weather Update



Although the weather has been mild in recent days, we all know how quickly the weather can change, especially in New England. It is important for all parents and caregivers to make sure students are properly dressed for the weather. Students go outside for recess daily unless it is raining or the wind chill is unsafe.

It is also important for parents and caregivers to update contact information and discuss inclement weather plans with their child. Specific information

related to late openings and early dismissals is outlined on the district website.



Special Recognitions

Third grade students made sixty-five Thanksgiving cards and poems that were delivered with each Thanksgiving basket that was donated by Ledyard Social Services. What a wonderful way to express care for others! Special thanks go to the third grade teachers, Mrs. David, and Mrs. Ensley for working on this project!



Mrs. Holdridge's sixth grade class donated a Thanksgiving dinner to a family through Ledyard Youth & Social Services. Her class is also corresponding with Keith Esposito, a 2007 graduate of Ledyard High School and a former student of Mrs. Holdridge's. He is a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine.



Mrs. Tedder's sixth grade class has adopted a family for the Christmas holiday as a community service project. They will be providing three gifts and a

food basket to a family in need as identified through Ledyard Youth & Social Services.



Samantha Lajoie, a third grader in Mrs. McNabney's class, has organized this year's Toys for Tots collection in honor of her father who is a Marine currently serving in Afghanistan.



Reminder

We are having some issues with students using language and actions that they have viewed while playing video games or watching music videos. It is very important to monitor a child's use of technology and electronic devices. The world is truly right at our fingertips!



Happy Holidays!