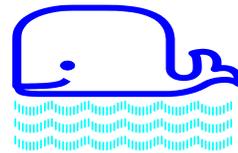


“THE WHITNEY WHALE WATCH”



January 13, 2021

Dear Eli Whitney Families,

Although it is traditional to wish everyone a “Happy and Healthy New Year,” please know that these words are sent with extra sentiment this year. In spite of the many challenges we continue to face, students continue to receive high quality instruction. Along with this, we continue to maintain many of our traditional events at Eli Whitney. In addition to our dedicated teachers, we also appreciate our students and parents for their consistent support. We continue to make great strides in this unprecedented time due to our strong partnerships.



Return to School:

Yesterday afternoon, Dr. Robinson sent out the following communication: “Monday is an observed holiday and our schools and Administration Center will be closed. Cohort A will report to school on Tuesday and Wednesday (January 19th and 20th). Cohort B will report to school on Thursday and Friday (January 21st and 22nd), with K – 1 and our English Language Learners (4 days/week) for that week only. The following week (week of January 25th), we will return to our normal Hybrid Model for Grades 5 – 12. At this time, Grades 2 through 4 can begin to attend 4 days/week, if desired. . . . The following week (February 1st) Grades 5 through 8 can begin to attend 4 days/week. Of course, as always, this depends on our numbers and no further surges or spikes.”



The JiJi Challenge:

Earlier today, we kicked off the “JiJi Challenge” for math. JiJi is the mascot for ST Math which is an important component of our math program. It is a spatial and temporal approach to math which incorporates problem solving. K – 2 students should be spending at least 60 minutes a week on this program, while students in grades 3 - 6 should be spending at least 90 minutes weekly on this program. Students also need to complete puzzles. The number of puzzles represents math problems solved. K–1 students should complete between 30 - 60 puzzles weekly, while students in grades 2 – 6 are expected to solve between 45 – 90 puzzles in a week. The “JiJi Challenge” plans to recognize students based on the level of achievement on these puzzles. When students return to the building they will see our “Wall of Fame” on the bulletin board outside Mrs. Scandurra’s room. We are tabulating the number of puzzles at these tiers: 1,500, 2,000, 2,500 and 3,000. Thus far we have more than 260 students who have completed 500 or more puzzles. We will keep you informed with regards to updates on the JiJi Challenge!



Music:

We had tremendous participation during our Virtual Sing Along on the morning of Wednesday, December 23rd. It was good to “see” so many people enjoying this community event. The Eli Whitney Music Department will be producing and emailing out to all parents a "Winter Virtual Performance" featuring dozens of Eli Whitney students at the end of this month. Additional information about this concert will be sent out in the near future.



Art Teachers:

As everyone knows, Mrs. Booska is our art teacher. Although she works with most of our students, our second graders have art with another art teacher, Mrs. Marks. However, Mrs. Marks is no longer available to teach art at Eli Whitney due to scheduling demands at her base school, Chapel Street School. We thank Mrs. Marks for everything she has done this year at Eli Whitney. Mr. Morelli started working with our second graders at the beginning of this week. He is an experienced art teacher who has been in the district for many years. We welcome Mr. Morelli to our Eli Whitney learning community.



Distance Learning Group:

Many of our distance learning families have connected by participating in our parent Distance Learning Group. In an effort to support each other, this group has met a few times already to share some common experiences and thoughts. All families of distance learners are invited to attend any or all of these meetings. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Mrs. Gramling at lizgramling@gmail.com.



Snow Days = Distance Learning Days:

Please remember that our “traditional snow days” are being paused for this school year. Stratford will automatically revert to Distance Learning anytime we must call for a snow day. In other words, the day will operate on a regular schedule (with no delay), but our students will be on Distance Learning and not in the schools. Please reference the district’s standard channels of communication for this information.



No Food Policy:

One of the purposes of the district’s “Food Allergy Management” policy is the prevention of severe allergic food reactions. *“Administrators and teachers will encourage non-food related alternatives to celebrate developmental milestones and student accomplishments.”*



Stratford Public Schools Meal Program:

This past week, the district sent out an email communication that outlined food service news. Today is the last day of the first phase which provided free meals on Monday and Wednesday. Beginning on Tuesday, January 19th (the projected return to in person learning) all school cafeterias will be providing a breakfast and lunch free to all students in school. Beginning January 25th, each cohort will be offered three meals to take home. This will require a sign up and more information will follow.



Principals' High Five:

We plan to celebrate December “High Five” recipients with a virtual experience provided by Mr. Veteri today. As you know, the Principal’s High Five Award recognizes students who consistently display our five values: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Honest, Be Safe and Be Kind. December’s Principal’s High Five Recipients include the following students: Tanner Bonetti, Richie Buturla, Annabelle Garzon, Robert Tannuzzo, Ryan Doyle, Julia Kannengeiser, Maya Maida, Connor Clarke, Max DeFillipo, Keegan Mutambo, Matthew Petrovich, Emma Feneque, Nicholas Massella, Quinn Mooney, Lydia Szczerba, Michael Boisvert, Jayden Ortiz, Alice Varner, Elias Ortega-Alemar, Jonathan Wong, Jackson Zukowski, Keily Acevedo, Anthony Darbilli, Jake Garrigan and Madelyn Worobec.



Parent Goal:

Schools regularly survey families in order to best meet the needs of the students. Our parent goal was derived from our spring 2019 Parent Survey. It states that, “Eli Whitney students will feel a sense of belonging in their school and learning environment.” In an effort to progress monitor, we recently conducted a short parent survey. Only 76% of our parents felt that their “child felt a sense of belonging to school.” As reflected in this communication, we are developing strategies to support this. Please share your thoughts with any of the staff members at Eli Whitney so that we can make connections with all of our students.



COVID - 19

As we continue to monitor COVID cases, please be sure to follow health guidelines. Washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing are key mitigation strategies. If a member of the household tests positive, it is important to notify our School Nurse, Mrs. Ciuci. Members of the household MUST quarantine for 10 days. If your child is not feeling well, please keep him/her home. In addition, if your family has traveled out of state or out of the country, please contact both your classroom teacher and Mrs. Ciuci as your family must quarantine before coming into the school building.



Safety Reminders:

For the most part, our new safety measures are solidly in place. During the winter months, we need to be cautious of possible ice and snow. Everyone needs to exercise caution when walking on school grounds. Additional patience is needed in the back parking lot at both arrival and dismissal. Please remember NOT to park in the four handicapped parking spaces in the front parking lot. We need to reserve these spaces for their intended use. Students should be arriving at school just before 8:30 when supervision begins. Finally, kindergartners need to have a responsible adult waiting at the bus stop. We appreciate everyone's continued support with our many safety measures.



PTSA:

In spite of the challenges of our current situation, our P.T.S.A. continues to be a vibrant and supportive group. It is never too late to join the P.T.S.A. If you are interested in becoming a member of the P.T.S.A., please contact Mrs. Gramling at lizgramling@gmail.com. The next virtual P.T.S.A. meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 3rd at 7:30 p.m.



Sterling House Food Drive:

In light of our current environment, many families continue to struggle with food insecurity. We continue to donate food for the food pantry at Sterling House. It is so gratifying when I enter the doors of Sterling House and I am greeted with "Eli Whitney is helping us again!" Please know that your contributions are greatly appreciated and are making a big difference for our neighbors.



Upcoming Events:

Next week is a four day week. There is no school on Monday in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. We are so excited that we resume in-school learning on Tuesday, January 19th. Cohort A will report to school on Tuesday and Wednesday (January 19th and 20th). Cohort B will report to school on Thursday and Friday (January 21st and 22nd), with K – 1 and our English Language Learners (4 days/week) for that week only. In addition, there is no school on February 12th and February 15th due to Presidents' Day weekend.

Although our current situation has put physical boundaries between us, our united spirit as a learning community remains steadfast. We continue to find ways to stay connected and positive which has strengthened our bonds. I continue to look forward to working with all of you in our efforts to support our children. I wish everyone a most happy and healthy 2021.

Sincerely,

Victoria K. Florek

Victoria K. Florek
Principal