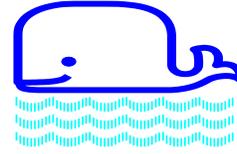


“THE WHITNEY WHALE WATCH”



October 13, 2020

Dear Eli Whitney Families,

It's hard to believe that this is our fifth week back at Eli Whitney. Safety continues to be our first priority. Our community members are following our new guidelines that include wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands. Everyone seems to be settling in with our “new normal.” Additionally, everyone is working together to maintain school traditions. Although we may be physically apart, I hope everyone feels the sense of being together in spirit.



Virtual Open House:

On September 23rd we conducted our virtual Open House. Although it was not the traditional event, we had close to 600 visits to our site. As much as we missed seeing each other in person, this format allowed busy families to participate and many presentations were shared. Visitors were able to view multiple classrooms and get a more global view of our Eli Whitney learning community.



New Instructional Normal:

Just as we are doing in other areas of our lives, we continue to adjust to our “new normal” with instruction. Although our primary focus this year is on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), we are also monitoring academic achievement. Classroom teachers and members of our support staff are working closely together to monitor student achievement. There may be times when a person (other than the classroom teacher) works with your child to support a specific skill. Students were away from in-person learning for three months last year and gaps in learning are expected. Please know that if a teacher has a serious concern with student's overall progress, parents are always notified. In an effort to better support our students and teachers, the district has decided to adjust the format of our Wednesday schedule. While all students are home on Wednesdays, they can expect to be engaged in learning activities with their teachers for the first half of the day, including live sessions with their class. During the afternoons, staff will be engaged in planning and collaboration activities so that they can better address the needs of our students as they balance a combination of remote and in person learners. Students will be expected to continue working on the independent academic tasks that their teachers have assigned to them and should be available for any live sessions the classroom teachers or support staff members schedule in the afternoons.



Kindness Club:

We all know that we are doing things a little differently this year. Every year in the spring we recognize students who have displayed an abundance of kindness throughout the year. Unfortunately, we needed to cancel last year's Kindness Breakfast. Last month, however these students were recognized with our traditional certificates. These recipients include the following students: Tyler Marcus, Chase Alicea, Nate Segui, Natalie Fleet, Andrew Rehm, Taylor Fabian, Casey Serafino, Emily Wargo, Sebastian Peglow, Juan Mendez Gil, Lily Perillie, Eva Marter, Austin Perry, Samantha Heffern, Maya Maida, Gianna Oliva, Ben Niedermeier, Garrett Bryk, Skylar Ricketts, Rowan Terwilliger, Ryan Salthouse, Anthony Darbilli, Will Dina, Neko Passaro, Victoria Erdos, Maylani Quintana, Jack Gomzi, Lily Haydu, Ryan Jacko, and Grace Rehm. Although they were unable to attend our breakfast ceremony, each of our recipients received a gift card to Parad-Ice Cream. We appreciate the generosity of Attorney Buturla who sponsored this event.



Parent Goal:

Last year our parent goal was the following: "Eli Whitney students will feel a sense of belonging in their school and learning environment." In light of our current situation, it was decided to continue our work in this area. To this end, all teachers will be delivering daily instruction in this area. In addition, many special activities are also planned. Research shows that when students feel connected to school it has a strong correlation to their social and emotional well-being.



Safety Reminders:

For the most part, everyone seems to be getting into the routine of following safety guidelines at both arrival and dismissal. Walking on the sidewalks that surround our building is a good safety practice. Even when we are outside, wearing masks is mandatory while on school grounds. B.O.E. policy 51.41.8 states that, "All students, staff, and visitors are required to use face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth, when they are inside the school building or on school grounds, even when social distancing is maintained." 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. Although safety has always been important, we are more keenly aware of this need due to recent events. We appreciate everyone's support with our many safety concerns.



Recess:

Part of the "new normal" at school pertains to recess. Spending time outside is strongly recommended. All classrooms are scheduled to have recess twice daily. As the weather is changing, temperatures fluctuate throughout the day. Everyone is encouraged to dress in layers.



Veterans' Day

As a nation we honor our veterans each November. We plan to continue with this important recognition of veterans. Although the magnitude of this event may be smaller this year, this does not diminish our sentiment. Under the supervision of Mrs. Wilcoxson, our front lawn will be decorated in recognition of our many veterans. Classroom teachers are planning relevant learning experiences for the children, as well.



P.T.S.A.

Our P.T.S.A. is a generous and supportive organization. Everyone is encouraged to join and attend our meetings which are held on the first Wednesday of the month. Our next meeting is scheduled for November 3rd though Zoom. Pink Spirit Day (for Breast Cancer Awareness) is scheduled for October 27th and October 30th. Everyone is encouraged to wear pink on these days. Although donations are optional, the P.T.S.A. is accepting a \$1.00 donation. Mrs. Sarah Rodrigues is our President. Mrs. Suzanne Kenny is our Treasurer and Mrs. Susan Marcus is our Secretary. Mrs. Liz Gramling oversees Membership while Fund-Raising is spearheaded by Mrs. Rich. If you are interested, we are looking for a Vice-President. You may contact the P.T.S.A. at this address: eliptsa@gmail.com.



Sterling House Food Drive:

Throughout this school year we will be conducting an on-going food drive which supports Sterling House. Families are asked to send in non-perishable items that can be placed in bins that are located throughout our building. These donations will be delivered to Sterling House on a regular basis. In this way, we become members of a much larger community.



Principal's "Air" High Five:

Each month we continue to recognize one student from each classroom who consistently displays our five characteristics of "Whale Worthy" behavior: Being Responsible, Respectful, Honest, and Always Safe and Kind. Although we are not able to celebrate as a group, we have some plans to celebrate remotely. Due to the extra amount of planning and preparation this year, we were not able to implement this initiative in September. However, we plan to announce our October recipients in the very near future.

**Upcoming Events:**

Wednesday, October 28th is a shortened day which allows teachers the time to participate in their Professional Learning Community (PLC). There is no school for students on November 3rd as it is Election Day. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled to take place on Tuesday, November 17 and Thursday, November 19th. Both days are scheduled as early dismissals. Wednesday, November 25th is also a shortened day due to Thanksgiving. Students are dismissed at 12:30 p.m. on shortened days. It is important that everyone has plans in place for dismissal on these early release days.

The meaning of community is even more important due to our current situation. I appreciate parents for your support with distance learning and our teachers who continue to go “above and beyond” with instructional practices. Our focus is clearly on the students who continue to amaze all of us.

Sincerely,

Victoria K. Florek

Victoria K. Florek
Principal