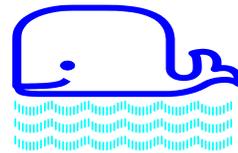


“THE WHITNEY WHALE WATCH”



December 15, 2020

Dear Eli Whitney Families,

In spite of these very challenging times, instruction continues to be rigorous at Eli Whitney. Additionally, our staff continues to evolve. Mrs. Bauer is our new Math Tutor. Not only is she a Stratford resident, but she is a certified educator with a great deal of experience in the district. Every member of our learning community continues to maintain our new safety measures, as well. It continues to be my pleasure to work with such a wonderful learning community.



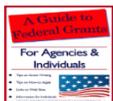
Distance Learning Group:

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 twice already to share some common experiences and thoughts. All families of distance learners are invited to attend any or all of these meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for January 11th through Zoom. 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.



BEST Mini Grant:

On Monday, November 30th, I received an email from the B.E.S.T. Committee announcing the recent winners of a BEST Mini Grant who are Eli Whitney resource teachers - Mrs. Cusmano, Mrs. Doyle, Ms. Lacafta and Mrs. Temple. The BEST grant supports our special education students with individualized IEP bins. These materials will be thoughtfully organized in order to strengthen skill areas and should also foster greater independence. We appreciate the teachers’ dedication to their students.



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."*



Principals' High Five:

We plan to celebrate November "High Five" recipients with a virtual experience provided by Mr. Veteri. 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.

November's Principal's High Five Recipients include the following students: Jonathan Barrios, Nora Ready, Juliet Rodrigues, Natalie Fleet, Helen Zaleski, Lucas Kelly, Ryan Boisvert, Ismael Diaz, Cortney Dobler, Scout Passaro, Antonio Biondi, Jaxon Keeler, O'Neal Ralph, Nathaniel Wilcox, Sydney Currier, Cristian Vasconcelos Oliva, Emily Wargo, Ameelah Carswell, Kenneth Fitts, Lilliana Yearwood, Jake Camperlengo, Courtney Higgins, Andrew Loyola and Gia Toni.



Early Bird Drive-Thru:

On Friday, December 18th from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m., Stratford's Senior Citizens are being treated to a delicious drive-thru meal courtesy of the Baldwin Center. Tammy Trojanowski, the Director of Community and Senior Services, reached out to Eli Whitney recently and enlisted support. We are so proud of our fifth graders who created holiday cards and baked sugar cookies to assist in this effort. We appreciate the supervision of the classroom teachers: Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Grindall and Mrs. Wilcoxson. We also thank the Sodexo staff and Mrs. Kotsky, our Cook, for providing the cookie ingredients and assisting with the baking.



Family Survey:

In an effort to continue to best service our families, we conducted a brief survey recently. We are thrilled that 175 families responded. 88% responded favorably that the school is a supportive environment. 86% of our parents reported that their child enjoys going to school while 84% said that they feel well-informed about what is going on at Eli Whitney. 82% of the respondents stated that they thought the school valued diversity. Finally, 76% of the parents thought that their child felt a sense of belonging to the school. Our goal in all of these areas is always 100%. The entire staff at Eli Whitney continues to strive to meet the needs of all our students and we appreciate your feedback. Please reach out to Mr. Veteri or me with any of your concerns in these specific areas.



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 and its results are found in this another section of this communication. Only 76% of our parents felt that their “child felt a sense of belonging to school.” As a staff we will continue our efforts in this area. Please share your thoughts with any of the staff members at Eli Whitney so that we can make connections will 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 14 days. If your child is not feeling well, please keep him/her home.



Safety Reminders:

For the most part, our new safety measures are solidly in place. As winter weather approaches, 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.



Recess:

Classrooms continue to have recess twice daily in an effort to spend time outside. In addition, teachers are encouraged to have open windows. As the temperature continues to fluctuate, please be sure that your children are dressed for the weather. Everyone is encouraged to dress in layers.



P.T.S.A.

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.



District Grant:

Dr. Kevin Klemme, the District Grant Writer, sent out this communication on Friday, December 4th. "I am writing to inform you that Eli Whitney Elementary School has been confirmed as a Title I school for the 2020-2021 school year. In fact, all Stratford Public Schools will be Title I schools this year. . . Within the limits of its allocation, each school receives funding for: tutors (elementary schools) or social workers (secondary schools), instructional supplies, parent activities, and after-school support (which may be reallocated, based on COVID-19 developments)." We are starting to organize our efforts in these areas. We will communicate our plans with you as our strategies develop.



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. Our generous deliveries are always well received by everyone at Sterling House which reminds us that the need for food banks continues to grow. I am hoping to make at least one more donation before the end of the calendar year.



Upcoming Events:

Next week is a shortened week. Our Winter Vacation begins next Wednesday, December 23rd. School is back in session on Monday, January 4th. Please remember there is no need to have our traditional snow days. When there are treacherous weather conditions, the district will transition to distance learning. Dr. Robinson will provide this communication through the past formats: local television channels, the district website and e-blasts.

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