

“THE WHITNEY WHALE WATCH”



November 12, 2020

Dear Eli Whitney Families,

During our ninth week of school, safety continues to be our first priority. Every member of our learning community continues to maintain our new safety measures. In addition, we are finding creative ways to move forward with many of our traditions. We are approaching our first round of report cards and parent conferences. These communication structures provide parents with valuable information about the students' progress.



Family Fun Night:

On Saturday, October 17th, we celebrated our very first virtual Halloween event as we enjoyed Family Fun Night ‘together in spirit.’ Families ordered pumpkins, cookies and pizza fixings ahead of time and picked them up in our back parking lot. In addition to thanking many families, special thanks is also extended to Wells Hollow Farm and Chaves Bakery who provided quality goods at modest prices.



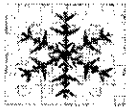
Amazon Ceremony:

Mrs. Karin Doyle, one of our first grade parents, works at the Stratford Town Hall. After reading a recent edition of “The Whitney Whale Watch” she contacted Amazon, a local business partner. Through their coordinated efforts, every school in town received two free picnic tables for outside learning. Additionally, every student received free math toolkits. In support of this effort, there was a “photo op” at Eli Whitney on October 19th which included a photograph of the following students: Antonio Biondi, Sophia Buturla, Crystal Cedillo, Jude Connor, Anthony Darbilli, Jake Doyle, Ryan Doyle, Asia Garvin and Rowan Terwilliger.



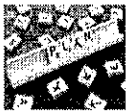
Distance Learning Group:

“Attention all families of full-time Distance Learners!” Eli Whitney is looking to start a parent support group for our full-time Distance Learners which will meet once or twice a month. They will meet over Zoom as a forum to support each other and connect with shared experiences. If you are interested in connecting with others, please contact Mrs. Gramling at lizgramling@gmail.com.



Snow Days = Distance Learning Days:

Our “traditional snow days” are being paused for this school year. When we have inclement weather, we will transition into a remote learning day. On Thursday, October 29, Dr. Robinson stated, “The State Board of Education has allowed for schools to revert to Distance Learning in the event of a snow day this year, rather than a day off that must be made up at the end of the school year. So, with that having been said, and for this year only (due to the pandemic and unprecedented times), Stratford will automatically revert to Distance Learning anytime we must call for a snow day. In other words, the day will be a regular schedule (with no delay), but our students will be on Distance Learning and not in the schools.”



Re-Entry Plan:

Dr. Robinson stated that all English Language Learners (ELLs), kindergarteners and first graders in Cohort A and Cohort B will return to school for four days (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) beginning Monday, November 16. Second, third and fourth graders in these two cohorts will return to school for these days on Monday, November 23. Fifth and sixth graders in these two cohorts return to school on these four days beginning Monday, November 30. This process is quite comprehensive and is posted on the district website. I have included some of the highlights in this communication. Arrival and dismissal procedures will remain the same. Lunch shifts will continue to be split between the classroom and the cafeteria. The wearing of masks, frequent hand washing and social distancing will be maintained. Except for P.E., instruction in the special content areas – Art, Music and Library – will take place in the classroom. Weather conditions will determine whether P.E. takes place outside or in the gym.



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:

Although we needed to “pause” the Principal’s High Five selections earlier in the year, we now have many recipients of this award for the month of October. 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. October’s Principal’s High Five Recipients include the following students: Kayden Acevedo, Rayan Adnane, Aubrey Baranyai, Jonathan DeLima, Norah Erdos, Gabriella Figueora, Emma Gelb, Olivia Goncalves, Alanah Hurley, Cooper James, Paul Karafa, Blake LaPietra, Ethan Leonard, Tyler Marcus, Ben Niedermeier, Preston O’Neill, Dominic Passabet, Sebastian Peglow, Daniel Sabia, Violet Sten, Matthew Solano, Samira Tanko, Lucas Vitiello, Zara Wong and Addison Yatsinko.



TC Virtual Mini-Lessons:

Teachers are beginning to include virtual mini-lessons for the workshop model of instruction in reading and writing. K - 2 students are also receiving phonics instruction through virtual meetings. Third graders are also receiving phonics instruction through the month of January in order to complete last year's instruction.



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.



Report Cards:

Elementary report cards will be shared with parents electronically through the Parent Portal this Friday, November 13. An important letter regarding report cards from our Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Gejda, will go home this week. Please review this report card with your child(ren). Teachers will provide a great deal of additional information during conferences that are scheduled for the following week.



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 continued support with our many safety measures. This effort is extremely important as we begin our re-entry plan next week.



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.



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 is decorated in recognition of our many veterans. Classroom teachers are planning relevant learning experiences for the children, as well.



P.T.S.A.

Pink Pledge was a huge success this year and we raised substantially more money than last year. Mrs. Maida's and Mrs. Pasmeg's classrooms were the most festively decorated rooms. Students in Miss Puskar's room raised the most money and are having a pizza party. Lastly, Mrs. Moretti and Mrs. Walsh were the winners of the "pinkest" outfits. The P.T.S.A. is currently taking orders for wreaths and poinsettias. November 20th is the deadline for orders. Pick-up is scheduled for November 29th from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in our back parking lot. If this date and time doesn't work for you, special arrangements for pick-up are available.



Sterling House Food Drive:

We continue to donate food for the food pantry at Sterling House. Our generous deliveries are always well received by everyone at Sterling House who reminds us that the need for food banks continues to grow.



Farewell:

On October 26, Ms. Thomas, our former Math Tutor, started a new chapter in her professional life. Ms. Thomas is currently a fourth grade teacher at Second Hill Lane. We thank Ms. Thomas for being a valued member of our learning community. We need to fill this vacancy which is posted on the District website. Applicants need to have a teaching certificate.



Upcoming Events:

Conferences are scheduled for November 17th and November 19th, which are early dismissal days at 12:30 pm. Especially this year is it so very important for parents and teachers to work together to support our students. Conferences are being scheduled electronically this year. If you have not yet signed up for a conference, please reach out by email to the classroom teacher or call our main office. There is no school on November 26th and 27th in observance of Thanksgiving.

The meaning of community is even more important due to our current situation. I appreciate both our parents 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