

# FRANK ASHLEY DAY MIDDLE SCHOOL

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November 10, 2011

Dear Day Families,

I hope this newsletter finds you doing well. When I composed the last newsletter, the students were all decked out wearing their team colors during our first Spirit Day. It just so happen that today was another Spirit Day, organized and advertised by Day's Student Council as "Sports Day." Therefore, most everyone was proudly displaying clothing that represented his/her favorite sports team. Student Council has deemed December 16 as "Twin Day," and everyone will be encouraged to wear matching clothes with a friend or friends. That should make for an interesting day!

Lest you think that it's all fun and games around here, you should know that today also brings the end of our first academic quarter. We plan on mailing Term 1 Report Cards home to you on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mark your calendar: As a reminder, November 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> are early-release days when students will be dismissed at 11:30.

Here is a list of additional updates within this correspondence that I hope will bring you up to speed:

1. Pages 1 and 2: Parent Teacher Conferences begin November 29. This newsletter includes information on how to sign up.
2. Page 2: We have a Thanksgiving Canned Food Drive underway to be followed by an Oglala Sioux Tribe Collection.
3. Pages 3 and 4: We will have Safe School Programming for all students during an upcoming early-release day.
4. Page 4: The School Council will meet on November 16 at 5:00 in Day's library.
5. Page 4: Day has a new program: Afterschool Academic Assistance or "AAA."
6. Page 5: You can learn more about Day's No Child Left Behind Report Card.
7. Page 5: Closing Thoughts: Days teachers have been hard at work on Tuesday afternoons, creatively exploring ways to encourage the children to think. That's right... to think... at ever deeper levels about the world around them. We are discussing higher-order thinking, making that thinking "visible" for everyone in the classroom to "see," and strategies for analyzing the students' level of conceptual understanding of our rigorous curricular content.

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## 1. Parent Teacher Conferences

It is soon time for everyone to sign up for parent-teacher conferences, which are contractually scheduled from 2:00 to 3:30 on the following Tuesdays: 11/29, 12/6, 12/13 and 12/20. These meetings are designed as check-ins to hear from teachers about your child's progress. Please do not feel obligated to schedule conferences, especially if you have recently met with staff or have already had all of your questions answered and concerns addressed.

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Prior to last year, when parents were able to meet with every one of their child's team teachers, many parents were entirely shut out of available conference time slots and, therefore, were left without a single team teacher meeting. We are limited to a total of 72 ten-minute slots with team teachers. Our primary goal last year and again this year is to ensure that every parent who wants a conference will get one. To reach our goal this year, like last year, we will create greater accessibility for *all* parents by having each family meet with either the science/ELA pair or the social studies/math pair, but not with both pairs. Doing this doubles the number of available conferences with team teachers and allows all parents to conference with at least two team teachers. If the conferences prove to be unacceptably limiting given your child's needs, please call your child's Guidance Counselor at any point and we will strive to ensure there is full communication between you and the teachers. Please know that we will always want to hear from you whenever you have concerns, whether about conferences, or any other topic.

### How to Schedule Your Conference Times

As in years past, we will use an online conference reservation system. Conferences will be held by appointment only. **The online scheduling period starts Thursday evening November 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m. and ends Sunday evening November 27<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 p.m.** To schedule a conference with your child's teacher(s), log on to the address: <http://www.virtualparagon.com/day/conference/>. Enter the password "Daydragons" (case sensitive) and follow the user-friendly instructions to create your own account and to choose the teachers, dates, and times of the conferences. Please note that you must create a new account even if you had an account last year. Please keep in mind these additional guidelines and information:

- You are free to sign up for one-on-one conferences with any special education teachers and/or multi-team teachers (e.g. world language, arts, music, physical education).
- You may only sign up with one pair of team teachers, not both.
- If one pair of team teachers is fully booked, please sign up with the other pair.
- If you have more than one child at Day, you are allotted one team-teacher slot per child.
- You may need to sign up for conferences on different days, depending on available time slots.
- If all slots for a teacher are taken and you would still like a conference, please inform the school by clicking on the link "Request a teacher to call me." The main office will receive and process these requests.
- You will be able to print out a copy of your personalized conference schedule.

If you need assistance or do not have online access, you may call the main office at 617-559-9100 for help. We look forward to seeing you soon.

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## 2. Canned Food Drive & the Oglala Sioux Tribe Collection

Day's Student Council has organized a Canned Food Drive. We collected 2,800 food items last year. The students plan on keeping the food deliveries local and hope to deliver the food themselves. This year's goal is 500 cans a team. That's 1,500 a grade and 4,500 for the whole school! The team that collects the most will win a pizza party. Feel free to check out the running tally in the cafeteria. Each team's current can count is posted there.

The 8th graders have begun putting up signs to gather winter coats, hat, gloves, mittens and long johns for the children of the Oglala Sioux Tribe (Lakota) in South Dakota. This has been their idea! You may have seen the news story with Diane Sawyer or the 20/20 show on Hidden America: Children of the Plains. We will begin collecting after the Thanksgiving Can Drive. Please consider contributing.

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### 3. Safe School Programming

One of Day's goals, as written in our School Improvement Plan, is to "ensure a respectful, safe and vibrant school environment in which students are responsible citizens." While we do many things to create such an atmosphere, we will further our efforts by setting aside time during an upcoming early-release day for the students to learn about hurtful and harmful language. We will call this day "STAND Up, Day," which is a play on words with our S.T.A.N.D. Club (Students Together Against Negativity and Disrespect).

We will encourage students within the community to "name, claim and stop" hurtful language and/or to notify an adult when needed. In other words, we hope students who hear or witness mean-spirited words will be able to safely name it (e.g. by saying something like, "that comment was mean and not cool"); claim it (e.g. by saying something like, "that made me uncomfortable because it was hurtful"); and stop it (e.g. by saying something like, "please don't say something like that any more").

We will encourage students to further show disapproval of any disrespectful behavior by showing their support for the student being targeted. If the person who is being mean sees other people being kind, maybe he/she will get the message that it's not cool or okay to be mean. Day children will be encouraged to try this:

- A. Invite the targeted student to join them as they walk away. We don't leave targeted students alone.
- B. Say something positive or complimentary to the student who is being targeted.
- C. Speak with and listen to the targeted student. Open up a conversation.
- D. Help the targeted student notify an adult.

We will encourage students to notify a responsible adult.

- A. Talk in person with someone.
  - i. Talk directly with a trusted adult in your family.
  - ii. Talk directly with an adult here at school. You should feel comfortable talking with any Day teacher or staff member, but you may choose to talk with whomever you feel most comfortable.
  - iii. Ask your teacher for a pass to go to Student Services to speak directly with a Guidance Counselor.
- B. Report it.
  - iv. You may obtain from your teacher or from Student Services a "Bullying Incident Reporting Form." Complete it and submit it directly to a Day teacher or to the "STAND UP, DAY" box in Student Services.
  - v. You may go online to <https://respect.newton.k12.ma.us/reportnow> and complete an online form, something you may do anonymously. When submitted, the form will automatically be emailed to Principal Turner.
- C. Write about it and share what you wrote with someone.
  - vi. Hand your written concern directly to a trusted adult in your family or here at school.
  - vii. Submit your written concern into the box labeled "STAND UP, DAY," which you will find located just inside the entrance to Student Services.

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We will encourage students learn more.

- A. Follow the link on Day's website called "Bullying Prevention and Intervention." It will take you to this website: <https://respect.newton.k12.ma.us/middle-school>.
  - B. Students can attend Day's S.T.A.N.D. Club (Students Together Against Negativity and Disrespect) or G.S.A (Gay-Straight Alliance) Club. S.T.A.N.D. and G.S.A meet every Tuesday before school and every Wednesday after school in room 104.
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### 4. School Council

The School Council is made up of parents, teachers and the principal and is charged with four primary goals.

- A. Adopting educational goals for the school that are consistent with local educational policies and statewide student performance standards
- B. Identifying the educational needs of students attending the school
- C. Reviewing the annual school building budget
- D. Updating the existing school improvement plan

If you are interested in participating in the School Council, please attend our next meeting scheduled for this coming Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 in Day's library.

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### 5. Day has a new Program called Afterschool Academic Assistance ("AAA")

#### AAA Introduction

There are three primary ways students can get help with school work afterschool. There are extra help sessions given on a voluntary basis by the teachers, there is Homework Club in the library, and there is now Afterschool Academic Assistance, or "AAA." Instead of a space and place where students and families can opt in like with HW Club, AAA will provide a safe space and place for students who need to be required to stay at school in order to successfully complete their homework. AAA provides students with a structured environment where they can finalize incomplete academic work. This program provides another layer of support for students who need to improve academically.

#### AAA Policy (As discussed and approved by last year's School Council)

Students who have habitually and consistently failed to satisfactorily complete homework even after multiple attempts by teachers and families to help turn things around will be mandated to stay after school every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday to complete their homework. After one month's duration within AAA, a determination will be made about whether or not it makes sense to continue AAA attendance.

Enrollment in AAA will never be a surprise to students and families. Instead, there will be a thorough process and clear communication between school and home forewarning families that inconsistent HW completion may trigger AAA. It is our hope that AAA programming will instill strong habits of highly effective learners.

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## 6. You may learn more about Day's Report Card

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires states and school districts to give parents/guardians report cards on the district and schools. Included in the report cards are student achievement data, information about the professional qualifications of teachers, testing and accountability. The report card helps to ensure that parents/guardians have important information about the schools their children attend. Involving families as full partners in the education of their children is a cornerstone of NCLB. We encourage you to become involved. Please connect through this website for the district and individual school report cards (<http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/curriculum/newton-annual-nclb-reports>). A copy of the report card is also available in Day's main office.

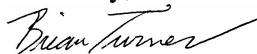
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## 7. Closing Thoughts

Day's teachers have been hard at work on Tuesday afternoons, creatively exploring ways to encourage the children to think. That's right... to think... at ever deeper levels about the world around them. Your child's teachers are discussing higher-order thinking, making that thinking "visible" for everyone in the classroom to "see," and strategies for analyzing the students' level of conceptual understanding of our rigorous curricular content. It is this very work that is so invigorating for us as we continuously learn as adults how to best help your children grow.

As always, we look forward to working with you throughout this school year as we foster a community focused on excellence in education. Please do not hesitate to be in touch whenever you have concerns, ideas and/or questions. As I have written before and will surely write again, we are eager to be of assistance and to ensure your child flourishes at Day.

Sincerely,



Brian Turner