



Delran Township School District Parent Newsletter

November, 2016 Edition

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NOVEMBER GREETINGS

Hello, parents! November is my favorite time of year. With the opening of school underway, students are settled into their school routines and instruction is humming along. Sports practices and games are giving our student athletes a chance to demonstrate character and strength. The weather is mild, with cool evenings and the changing leaves in full swing and bursting with color. This is the time of year when I pull out my crock pot and forage for recipes that can simmer all day long. It also marks the test of how long we can delay turning the heat on in the house. My sons – despite their upcoming Eagle Scout and Boy Scout status – would cave at the first evening of 50° temperatures if they had their way.

We've had a very successful start to the year and are excited about the important work ahead of us.

EMERGENCY CALLING SYSTEM

In the very near future our school district will begin to use *School Messenger* for automated emergency notifications through text messages. We will begin to use this system for notification about weather-related delayed openings and school closings, though we can use the system for other notifications also. Families will have the option to receive text message notifications, in addition to the usual phone messages. Watch for more information in next month's issue of our parent newsletter.

HOMEWORK SURVIVAL TIPS FOR PARENTS

Now that the school year has begun, regular homework will likely be a part of your child's life. Here are some strategies that may help you to have a peaceful household when your child sits down to complete his/her homework. I hope you find these useful!

Set a Regular Homework Time

- Meals and bedtime are at regular intervals, and giving homework the same consideration gives it equal importance.
- Tune into your child's body clock. Many children need "down time" when they get home from school and won't be able to put forth their best effort on homework until they've had a break. Some children are worn out by 7:00 and won't be able to concentrate on challenging work if it comes too late in the evening.

- Ease the transition to homework. Gentle reminders like, "You have 10 more minutes before you need to sit down for homework," will get your child mentally ready for stopping their play.
- Limit conflicting activities during the school week. If extra-curricular activities leave inadequate time for homework, you are modeling for your child that homework holds a lower priority than those activities.

Choose an Appropriate Location

- Limit distractions.
- Minimize interruptions.
- Have supplies readily available – technology, crayons, number lines, manipulatives, paper, etc.
- Keep noise levels low.
- Supply an appropriate amount of supervision.

Responses for "I don't want to do my homework now!"

- Give children a choice in when they will do their homework – and then hold them to their choice.
- Work in 10 or 20 minute spurts.
- Encourage a "brain break". A ten-minute break to have chocolate milk or some pretzels can do wonders for a child's mood and attention.
- Allow children to choose which subject to do first.

How Parents Can Set a Good Example

- Parents should "linger" in the homework area to monitor, guide, and give encouragement.
- Pay bills or write letters while your child works on homework.
- Do homework of your own.

Finally, remember that children put in a 7-hour school day and are focused, well-behaved, and responsible for nearly all of that time. (Really!) They are worn out at the end of the day and need some support and nurturing to put forth their best effort and thinking on homework. Our ultimate goal for homework should be to encourage self-motivation, self-discipline, responsibility, and a love learning. It is probably unrealistic for us to expect our children to LOVE homework. Most of us have homework associated with our jobs and I don't know anyone who comes in the door at 6:00 at night thinking, "Hooray! I have homework tonight!" Above all, DO check with your child's teachers if you sense that your child is having a difficult time with homework, learning concepts, etc. They appreciate and value your input.

FOR ASPIRING WRITERS

Are you living with an aspiring student writer? *Figment* might be of interest to you. <http://figment.com> is like Facebook for aspiring writers. Students can share their work with readers around the world. After creating a free Figment profile, students can post original short stories, poems, and novels for their classmates and others to read and review. *Figment* also has excerpts from new books, interviews with authors, writing contests, and discussions. Before each piece of writing is an estimate of how many minutes it will take to read.

PARCC ASSESSMENTS

In the 2014-2015 school year, New Jersey transitioned from its former assessments to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in mathematics and English language arts. The PARCC assessments more accurately measure the higher-level skills developed under the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and provide parents and educators with meaningful information to improve teaching and learning. Starting in 2015, our district began to distribute annual PARCC student score reports to parents. There are resources to assist with interpreting individual score reports that can give parents a common language to use in discussions with teachers about their child's progress. Take a few minutes to visit the Department of Education's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/parcc/scores/> for additional links and information. For more information on the PARCC test, including FAQs, videos and links to practice tests, visit <http://understandthescore.org/>. To see a practice test and for resources to help your child at home, visit <http://bealearninghero.org/classroom/PARCC>. Also visit the New Jersey Department of Education's resources online at <http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment>.

Sample test items are continually being released for districts and parents to review. Here are two for your previewing:

Grade 3 Math Sample

Click on all the equations that are true.

- 8 x 9 = 81
- 54 ÷ 9 = 24 ÷ 6
- 7 x 5 = 25
- 8 x 3 = 4 x 6
- 49 ÷ 7 = 56 ÷ 8

Grade 7 Language Arts Sample

Student Directions: Based on the information in the text "Biography of Amelia Earhart," write an essay that summarizes and explains the challenges Earhart faced throughout her life. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.

The Language Arts tests are more rigorous and connect with deeper and more sophisticated English/Language Arts core standards. We're working at all grade levels to increase

students' reading stamina, and to provide students with diverse content, and to require more writing for analysis and informational purposes to prepare them for these assessments – and for the rigors of high school and college. I'll be sure to share more information about the state's testing program in each edition.

DELRAN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS RECEIVE NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Delran Township Schools' ecosystem, Delran STEM Ecosystem Alliance was recognized with three other New Jersey communities during the month of October. Delran's ecosystem joined 36 other groups from around the country in Denver last week as part of a White House-backed national campaign to reimagine how to deliver Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects to pre-K to 12th grade students, through partnerships with industry, museums, afterschool providers, universities and parents. The district received a \$60,000 grant from the Overdeck Foundation to fund the district's work with the Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM, a growing national organization which already manages 36 other STEM projects to benefit children in areas around the nation. A key to the idea is that each "community" is an integrated ecosystem, where schools, colleges, businesses and educators work together with students and parents to prepare for the STEM jobs that will drive the economy in the future. Future editions will highlight our work in this area.

Attention Parents!

If you are interested in reading the book **OCTOBER SKY** by Homer Hickman as part of a short winter Adult Book Club, please e-mail me by Friday, December 2nd.

My tentative plan is that we would set a reading deadline and then meet once to discuss over tea/coffee and treats. When you RSVP, please indicate your preference for a morning (8:30) or evening (7:00) session. You'll need to download the book or get your own copy. You'll definitely want to pass it on when you're through. Financial assistance is available for a purchased copy of the book in special circumstances. Please reach out to me for support in this manner.

Thanks for your interest!

~ Kari McGann

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