

December 1, 2008

Dear Parents,

December is typically a very busy month for all of us as we prepare for the holidays in our homes with our families and at school with our students. There are many “extras” to do, but we must not get too distracted as our children rely on a set schedule. During December, schedules tend to be altered to accommodate our holiday preparations. It is very important to try to keep a set schedule as much as possible for your children so that they are focused on their school work. The first trimester marking period ends on December 10th and report cards will be sent home with the students on December 18th. We will be starting the second trimester marking period on December 11th and any concerns regarding your child’s school work should be addressed before the school vacation so s/he may be able to use the extra time to get their work done. A set schedule and plenty of sleep will help your child to successfully complete her/his school work at this time of year and enjoy the Holidays with their families.

Some important information to share with you for December:

1. Winter arrives officially on December 22nd. The weather has become very cold and inclement weather looms daily. If school should be closed due to bad weather – “*No School Foster-Glocester*” – announcements will be made by **WJAR News Channel 10** (television), **WPRO 63 AM and Lite 105 FM** (radio stations).
2. **6th Grade Parents** should plan to have your children immunized before the start of 7th grade. The New Year is a good time to plan any needed appointments. All students entering the seventh grade next year (2009-2010) must have their vaccinations up to date before the start of the school year.
3. The Middle School Basketball Season has begun. Students are welcome to stay after and cheer on the boys and girls’ teams. The games start around 3:00 P.M. and end at 4:15 P.M. **Any students who stay to watch the games must arrange for a ride home and be picked up by 4:30 P.M.** Arrangements for a ride home must be made before the day of the game – students are not allowed to call home during the school day to make any “last minute” plans.

4. A **Scholastic Book Fair** will be held December 3rd through 5th in the School Library Media Center. *Books make great stocking stuffers and all purchases at the book fair earn books for classrooms and the library!* Special shopping time for friends and family will be held from 6:00-7:00 P.M. before the chorus concert on December 3rd.
5. **LifeTouch Picture Make Up Day** on Friday, December 12th in the morning.
6. **“The Box Tops 4 Education”** program is alive and well at Ponaganset Middle School.

We have been participating in the program for a few years and teams collected thousands of Box Tops. The monies earned will be used by the individual teams for a variety of purposes such as defraying the cost of a field trip, or purchasing a team camera. Our students directly benefit from this fundraising activity.

Ponaganset families and neighbors can easily participate in this fundraiser. Before you recycle your paper goods check each item for a Box Top coupon. Clip the coupon and send it to school with your child. For a complete list of grocery items that have Box Top coupons please visit the website www.boxtops4education.com. In the upper left hand corner of the home page click on the tab to the far left labeled “All About Box Tops”. This is where you can obtain the Box Tops product lists. You can also register to receive information about promotions and coupon offers by clicking on “Sign Up Now” in the upper right hand corner of the home page.

The Grade 8 Blue Team coordinates the Box Tops program as a community service activity within the school. It is run by students to benefit students. If every Ponaganset Middle School student can collect 10 Box Tops we will double our earnings from last year. Thank you in advance for your support. Please call Mrs. Morse at 647-3361 ext 2202 with any questions.”
7. **Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program:** P.M.S. has been awarded a \$31,000. grant to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to our students daily. Students are currently eating fresh apples from a local orchard.
8. The **Weekly Workout Challenge** will come to an end on December 12th. At this point the program (created by the P.E. Leaders Club) has 442 students and faculty participating with the aim of exercising for at least 60 minutes a day, 5 days a week. The school is in an 8 week Team Competition with the prize of a Spring Field Day for the winners. Participants log their minutes by visiting: www.presidentschallenge.com. (The Yellow Team just passed the Faculty who have been in the lead for the past 5 weeks!).
9. P.M.S. sponsors many **holiday projects during the month of December** such as the Stuffed Animal Rescue League, Food Drive, and the Holiday Gifts for Teens Campaign. All of these projects benefit children and/or families

within our communities or the state as well as teach our students the importance of giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. Please see the attached page of **P.M.S. Holiday Happenings**. Notices will be given to the students regarding information for the projects. *These projects are very successful each year due to your generosity; your support is greatly appreciated!*

On behalf of the faculty and staff, Happy Holidays to all of our Ponaganset Families!

Sincerely,

Patricia Marcotte
Principal

P.M.S. Holiday Happenings 2008

Canned Food Drive:

Thank you for supporting the food drive this year - 899 food items went to the Foster and Glocester food banks due to your generosity and the Fienstein Foundation will match that in the dollar amount!!!!. This success is due to the combined efforts of the P.M.S. Student Council, Sodexo Food Services, and the Fienstein Hunger Brigade... again, thank you!

Mrs. Procopio

PMS Student Council Advisor

Warming Tree:

We are collecting mittens, gloves, scarves, hats, and blankets. You can help the Warming Tree "grow" in the foyer outside the main office by placing donations of new or clean, gently used mittens, gloves, scarves, and hats on the tree's branches.

Orange Team

Music Concerts:

Chorus concert 12/3. Band concert 12/10. Both are 7:00 P.M. at PMS Auditoria.

Deirdre Spadazzi, Melissa Reynolds

Music Teachers

Stuffed Animal Rescue League:

The 24th annual PMS Stuffed Animal Rescue League has swung into action. The PMS Feinstein Youth Hunger Brigade is collecting "gently used" and new stuffed animals and toys from now until December 17th. These donations are being collected in room 233, Mrs. Leary's room. The stuffed animals and toys will be brought to Caritas (who shares them with the homeless shelter at the Howard Complex) in Cranston where they will be distributed to children not only for the holidays but throughout the year.

Orange Team

Holiday Gifts for Teens Campaign:

The Red team is assisting the Department of Children, Youth and Families by "adopting" a shelter for teenage boys. We are accepting donations of new, unwrapped gifts or cash. All donations are being collected in room 211, Mrs. Shaw's room. All donations must be in by December 17th so students can wrap and label the gifts for delivery. We thank you for your support in teaching our children a very valuable lesson, "we can reach out to help others in need and bring some joy to a child who feels alone in the world."

Red Team



School Success Checklist for Parents

Read each of the following and put a check mark by the ones you are doing well. Pat yourself on the back for being a good parent. Take note of the ones that you did not check, and work on each one separately over the next months. Share these ideas with friends who have children in school.

- **Make sure your child has an excellent attendance record.** When you allow your child to stay at home because of whining or pleading, your actions say that you think school is not important.
- **Never say negative things about your own school experience.** If the child hears you say that you hated school when you went, the child (wanting to be like you) will decide that he or she hates school also.
- **Never say that you don't like to read.** Parents are the most important people in a child's life. If parents don't like to read, the child will not like to read either.
- **Let your child's teacher know about concerns in the family that may make the child have a bad day, or make the child unable to focus on schoolwork.** Examples are such things as a car accident, a death in the family, a sibling in the hospital, or the child having trouble sleeping during the night because of leg cramps.
- **Don't wait for the teacher to call you if you think there is a problem at school for your child.** Always feel free to contact the teacher and be proactive for your child.
- **Always be positive about small steps your child takes toward a larger goal.** An example: If your child has 18 spelling words and can spell 12, be positive about those that your child can spell. Break down the remaining 6 words into three groups of 2 words each, have a small celebration when he or she has learned 2 more words, and then go after the next group.
- **Do not do homework for your child, but always "check up" on how assignments are going.** Give helpful hints and offer suggestions, but if a child cannot do his or her own work, the teacher needs to know that from the homework the child turns in. If you correct the mistakes, the teacher will not know the areas in which your child needs help.
- **Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep before a school day.** Turning out the lights and leaving a CD/tape

player on the bed with recorded stories is a good way to get children to calm down and become ready to sleep. Do not leave the books that come with the recordings. Let the children close their eyes and imagine the pictures that the words of the story evoke.

- **Make sure your child eats a good breakfast each morning.** Learning takes energy, and energy comes from a good night's sleep *and* a healthy breakfast.



What Is Influencing Your Child?

As a parent, you are probably concerned about who is influencing your child. You know the importance of making sure he or she has friends with the same moral values as you. In addition to being aware of who is influencing your child, you should be concerned about what is influencing your child.

The "what" in this instance is the use of alcohol. According to the *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism* website (www.niaaa.nih.gov), underage drinking

is a major public health challenge. The statistics are startling. By the time young people reach the eighth grade, nearly 50 percent of them have had at least one drink and over 20 percent report having been "drunk." Approximately 20 percent of 8th graders and almost 50 percent of 12th graders have consumed alcohol within the past 30 days.¹

Acting Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., spoke out about this epidemic in the first *Call to Action* against underage drinking. "Too many Americans consider underage drinking a rite of passage to adulthood," said Dr. Moritsugu. "Research shows that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life. New research also indicates that alcohol may harm the developing adolescent brain. The availability of this research provides more reasons than ever before for parents and other adults to protect the health and safety of our nation's children."

Is there anything you can do to make it less likely that your child will succumb to the lure of underage drinking? *The Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free* website (www.alcoholfreechildren.org) gives this advice: "As a parent or caregiver, you play a vital role in influencing your child's attitudes and behaviors. You serve as a role model on the use of alcohol, control the availability of alcohol in your home, and help set your child's expectations concerning drinking behaviors. A recent study shows that children whose parents are involved in their lives hold regular conversations, attend after-school events, and listen to

their problems are less likely to drink or smoke."

With the help of the websites mentioned above, you can arm yourself with statistics about underage drinking, learn to recognize warning signs, learn how to open up lines of communication with your child, and be aware of the laws in your state regarding underage drinking.

¹ Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., and Bachman, J.G., *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use. Overview of Key Findings, 2002*. NIH Pub. No. 03-5374. Bethesda, Maryland, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2003.



Cell Phones Pose Hidden Dangers for Kids

Cell phones leave children susceptible to contact from strangers. Many parents have no idea that predators and strangers have almost unrestricted access to their children via social networking sites, texting, instant messaging, and other phone technology.

AdaptiveMobile, a leading provider of mobile subscriber protection headquartered in Ireland, found in a survey that children access the internet from their phones on average of nine times per day, often without their parents' knowledge.

Children and teens use their cell phones as sophisticated communication tools. Many times, they understand the technology much better than their parents. Parents should not let this cause them to restrict the use of what is a powerful outlet and safety device, however. Learning just a little bit about cell phones and their use will enable you to keep your child safe and still allow him or her to use a cell phone.

Parents can work with their mobile service provider to block certain websites, technologies, and access from outsiders to their child's phone. Here's some other information from [AdaptiveMobile](#) that parents need in order to understand the risks of cell phone use by their children:

- Sites such as Facebook and Bebo are easily accessed by cell phone, allowing children to communicate with both friends and strangers. The mobile world is becoming a haven for predators who recognize that the lack of parental control works to their benefit.
- Teenagers are most active with their texting after 10 p.m., and most parents are unaware of this activity. Texting has become a means by which predators reach children, using the cell phone numbers that children and teens often post on their personal web pages or social networking sites.
- Even if mobile Internet capabilities are disabled, children can still send images using their camera phone and a multimedia message service.

- There are no built-in controls in mobile phones that can prevent children from surfing sites like YouTube or those displaying pornography or advocating violence, drug use, and more.



Parents' Own Experiences Affect Boundaries for Their Teens

Parents who drank or used drugs at their own proms or graduations have a tendency to be more permissive with their boundaries when their own kids experience these teen events, according to a survey by Partnership for a Drug-Free America and MetLife Foundation.

In this recent survey, 87 percent of the parents who did not drink or use drugs set a "zero-tolerance policy" for their teenagers. However, that number dropped to 66 percent when it was parents who drank or used drugs on these special occasions during their youth.

The information also revealed that when parents talk to kids about alcohol and drug abuse, their teens take the messages to heart. Only 16 percent of teens whose parents set a zero-tolerance policy indicated that there was a likelihood of using drugs or alcohol. However, 45

percent of teens whose parents didn't set such boundaries reported they were likely to drink or use drugs at prom or graduation celebrations.

"When parents talk, most teens actually do listen," said Steve Pasierb, president and CEO of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. "The drug abuse landscape that teens face today is drastically different than when today's parents were teens. We know that parents are the greatest point of leverage in preventing drug and alcohol abuse. And this survey reinforces the fact that kids live up to parents' expectations as well as down to them."

Before big events such as homecomings, 16th birthday parties, and more, remind your teens of your expectations. Set clear, non-negotiable rules.

Pasierb also suggests parents encourage fellow parents to enforce the same rules. Some parents say that they'd rather have their kids drink at home because they think they are safe there. This becomes an open-door policy to other kids who might drink and drive, leaving parents open to liability for accidents related to drugs or alcohol consumption at their house.



Kwanzaa to Be Celebrated by All

Kwanzaa is a week-long event that honors the heritage of African-Americans. It is observed from December 26 to January 1. While most observers are African-Americans, the celebration continues to become more inclusive.

Kwanzaa was created by political activist Ron Karenga in 1966. Though it was originally intended to be a holiday for African-Americans, in 1997 Karenga amended this position. While still honoring African heritage, Kwanzaa should be celebrated by any individual of any culture or race. Karenga hopes it will become similar to Cinco de Mayo and Chinese New Year, which are commonly celebrated outside of their original cultures.

Decorate Safely for the Holidays

It's holiday decorating time. More people are decorating both outside and inside than ever before. Review these safety tips before you begin:

- ❖ Don't use a ladder if you take medications that could make you dizzy or drowsy.
- ❖ Be sure someone knows you are using a ladder. Better yet, have someone hold the ladder steady as you use it.
- ❖ Stick with ground decorations if your ladder isn't in perfect condition.

- ❖ Keep two hands and one foot on the ladder, or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times. Never lean out farther than your belt buckle.
- ❖ Whether inside or out, avoid overloading circuits. Use a power strip that has a built-in circuit breaker.
- ❖ Don't use indoor lights outside they may not be waterproof. Don't use outdoor lights inside because they burn hotter.
- ❖ Replace light strings with frayed cords, damaged plugs, or damaged light sockets. New light strings are best, and they won't go out at an inconvenient time.
 - ❖ Unplug all lights when you leave the house or go to bed.



A Parents' Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house

I searched for the tools to hand to my spouse.

*Instructions were studied and we were inspired,
In hopes we could manage "some assembly required."*

The children were quiet (not asleep) in their beds,

While Dad and I faced the evening with dread:

A kitchen, two bikes, Barbie's town house to boot!

And, thanks to grandpa, a train with a toot!

We opened the boxes, my heart skipped a beat...

Let no parts be missing or parts incomplete!

Too late for last-minute returns or replacement;

If we can't get it right, it goes in the basement!

When what to my worrying eyes should appear,

But 50 sheets of directions, concise but not clear,

With each part numbered and every slot named,

So if we failed, only we could be blamed.

More rapid than eagles the parts then fell out,

All over the carpet they were scattered about.

"Now bolt it! Now twist it! Attach it right there!

*Slide on the seats, and staple the stair!
Hammer the shelves, and nail to the stand."*

"Honey," said hubby, "you just glued my hand."

*And then in a twinkling, I knew for a fact
That all the toy dealers had indeed made a pact*

To keep parents busy all Christmas Eve night

With "assembly required" 'til morning's first light.

We spoke not a word, but kept bent at our work,

'Til our eyes, they went bleary; our fingers all hurt.

The coffee went cold and the night, it wore thin

Before we attached the last rod and last pin.

Then laying the tools away in the chest,

We fell into bed for a well-deserved rest.

But I said to my husband just before I passed out,

"This will be the best Christmas, without any doubt."

"Tomorrow we'll cheer, let the holiday ring,

And not have to run to the store for a thing!

*We did it! We did it! The toys are all set
For the perfect, most perfect, Christmas,
I bet!"*

*Then off to dreamland and sweet repose
I gratefully went, though I suppose*

There's something to say for those self-deluded...

*I'd forgotten that **BATTERIES** are never included!*

