

# Little Mountain Elementary School Newsletter



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Dear Parents/Guardians:

Over the next few weeks, you will see education hold an increasingly predominant focus in both local and provincial news outlets. Article topics will focus on: educating the 21<sup>st</sup> century child; the implementation of New Curriculum across all grade levels; how assessment data is used and/or should be used; the possible restructuring of grades at Elementary, Middle and High Schools, and the challenges of balancing a budget in an economy which has its' own trials and tribulations. Editorials are already painting a dreary outlook for the near future and are asking questions about how it will be possible to achieve student success for all students with less available resources. While I do agree that the future will be challenging, it is also a time of excitement for students and staff alike. It is going to be a time to plan how we, the school and the home can work together to ensure the success of all of our students, beginning in Pre-school and ending as High School Graduates having acquired the skills necessary to be positive contributing members to society.

Student success in a school setting can actually be predicted before a child even enters Kindergarten. Studies have shown that early childhood experiences with oral language are critical to the development of later literacy skills. The more a child is exposed to oral language by the age of four, the better a chance they have for success at school. Studies have gone on to show that the language skills at three years of age, is a predictor of their success or struggles at school at the age of nine. Therefore, the earlier that parents become involved in their children's language and literacy development (reading books, having open-ended conversations, asking questions, etc.) the more profound the results and the longer the lasting effects.



Once a child enters a school system, the good work that parents do in the area of oral language development continues to grow. Studies show that parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of their young children through supporting their learning in the home rather than just relying on the child's school to "look after it." This makes sense because after all, children between the ages of 5 and 16 spend 15% of their lives in school and 85% with their families. The family support for a child's learning begins with having a regular, significant reading and school debrief time each day and having meaningful discussions about what he/she did at school that day – ask questions directed at understanding, explaining, clarifying. Try to get beyond the standard answer of "...I don't know" or "...nothing" when you ask what they experienced that day. Beyond having a regular "reading/homework time," there are other things that families can do to support the success of their children as they progress through school, regardless if it is private or public:

- First and foremost, limit the amount of "screen time" that your child has each day. Studies are showing that children who have the most success at school are those that have limited screen time each day with the optimum number being approximately 1 hour per day only.
- Second, as your child gets older, please do not assume that they need less support as they go through school. Make a point to get to know your child's teacher(s) whether they are in a primary grade or a secondary grade. As parents we want our children to learn responsibilities and we want them to become independent, but first we need to provide them with the "map for success," and guidance as they move along this continuum. Ensure that homework is completed regularly by asking specific questions about it and by touching base with the teacher(s) to check for success or lack thereof. Contrary to what we are led to believe by our children, the teachers in the middle and secondary schools are thankful when a parent asks about their child's progress, even when they appear to be "doing well" in school. At Little Mountain, we are grateful for the support that we get from our parent community. We realize that the success of our students is directly attributed to the support that is provided in the home and at school. Our greatest success stories have occurred in those instances where there has been an open

line of communication between the teacher, parent and student. Our children thrive when they realize that the adults around them care and are working together to try and meet their needs. They struggle when they see the home and school are “at odds” and there is mistrust between the adults involved in their education.

- Third, student success is closely linked to how well prepared a child is for school. Are they dressed for success? Are they arriving on time consistently? Do they have all of their tools (pencils, pens, completed homework) to learn? Have they had enough sleep, eaten breakfast, left home with a positive comment and encouraged to do their best at school? Answering YES to ALL of these questions will eliminate the majority of the struggles that we see in our school each day with individual children that arrive with the “weight of the world” on their shoulders.

Our school’s mission statement focuses on achieving success for all of our students regardless of age or grade level. We know that we have achieved our goals when we see our students doing well after they have left our school and are in either middle school or high school. We know that every student is unique and has both strengths and challenges and that they will only succeed if we work closely with each family to better understand how he/she learns. Trying to reach a child’s needs in isolation is a failed venture whether the school is trying to do it on their own or the home is trying to do it without the support of others. Working as a team, home and school, allows us to provide the supports that each child needs to become a confident, successful learner at each grade level.

Until next month.....



### Parent Visitors to our School

As the administrator at LME, my hope when I arrived was to help our school become the center of our school community. Encouraging an “open door policy” has built understanding, support and created open lines of communication between parents and staff. The importance of building a supportive environment has been especially evident when our community has been challenged by difficult events that have affected us all. With this increase in the important role our school plays in the community, we are now being faced with challenges that we hadn’t expected. Our pupil numbers have steadily increased the last two years and “student work space” outside of the classroom is becoming limited. Therefore, as a staff, we have put into place some protocols that we hope our parent community will follow and respect to ensure our school’s and our students’ security, protect the learning environment and at the same time still allow our parent community to use their school as a place to meet, share ideas, experiences and formulate plans.

Our request is that the following protocols are followed to allow us to who is in the building at all times:

- If your child arrives to school prior to 8:00 am, please direct them to come into the school through the front doors and remain at the office until supervision begins. Students are not to wander the building putting away backpacks, changing shoes, hanging up jackets, visiting their classroom until the morning bell goes.
- For parents who bring their children to school and enjoy taking them to their classrooms in the morning, please remain in the front lobby until the morning bell goes. Parents who want to accompany their children to the outside lineup in the morning and keep their children company if they are at all apprehensive, are welcome to continue to do so. We only ask that parents do not enter the building until the morning bell goes or they are invited in by the classroom teacher.
- On inclement weather days, students will be asked to come directly into the school upon their arrival, go to their classroom and get prepared for the day’s events and activities.
- All visitors during the school day are to stop in at the office and sign in, regardless of their length of stay. Knowing who is in the building at all times is critical for student security.
- At dismissal time in the afternoon, parents are invited to congregate in our lobby area at the office or use our Parent Room, if it is not occupied, until 2:10 pm each day. By keeping the hall areas free, it will encourage our staff to utilize all areas of our school in meeting the needs of the students in their classrooms.

Thank you for respecting these fore-mentioned requests as we try to meet the educational needs of our students.

## Flu season is Upon Us



From time to time, schools experience higher than normal rates of absenteeism due to illness. To help control the spread of seasonal illnesses amongst our student population, we ask that you encourage your child to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap. We encourage them to do this at school and having it reinforced at home would be beneficial. If your child is experiencing symptoms of Influenza please keep them at home until they are feeling better. Having them come to school when they are ill means that they are not physically and mentally able to work in the classroom. In addition, having your child at school when they are ill, will make others susceptible to the same illness and may cause further consequences to other children who may have compromised immune systems already.

## Foundation Skills Assessment – Why?

Over the next 6 weeks, all students in Grades 4 and 7 in our province will be writing the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). The FSA is a series of assessments in Reading Writing and Numeracy. The assessments do not measure a student's ability to memorize specific facts, but rather, it measures skills that students have gained over their previous years of learning. Parents of students in these grades may have/will be receiving information from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) / Chilliwack Teacher's Association (CTA) outlining their concerns with these assessments and asking parents to have their children excused from writing these assessments.

It is important for you to know that I feel this series of assessments plays an important role in setting direction for our school. It provides staff with valuable information regarding how our students in Grade 4 are doing in Literacy and Numeracy at this time of year. It allows us to compare the student's individual FSA results with how they are doing in their daily work and how the results compare to the student's grades at the end of each term. If there is a significant discrepancy between any of these areas it allows us to question why the discrepancy has occurred and then plan for interventions that need to take place. As a staff we are concerned when organizations such as the Fraser Institute uses the data, in my opinion, inappropriately to "rank" the schools in the province, but I cannot help how others use this information. I can only re-assure you that the completion of these assessments by all eligible Grade 4 students in our school is important for our school's academic direction. It is important for me to know that the data that is gathered over the next 6 weeks is as authentic and meaningful as possible. For more information on this topic, please see the attached letter from Evelyn Novak our School District Superintendent.

## Ministry of Education Satisfaction Surveys

The Ministry of Education, each year, asks the students in grades four, seven, ten and twelve to complete a Satisfaction Survey online. The parents of each child are also asked to complete an identical survey. The survey results provide student, parent, and staff opinions regarding the school they are associated with. The questions measure areas such as achievement, human and social development, health and safety at school. School Parent Advisory Councils and School Districts use survey results for planning, improvement and goal setting. The grade 4 classes in our school will be completing this online survey in the next few weeks. Their Parent/Guardians will be receiving information regarding access to the e-survey in the next week as well.

## Kindergarten Registration

We are currently accepting Kindergarten registrations for the 2016-2017 school year. Presently we have 32 students registered and we are urging all parents who have a child that turns 5 on or before December 31, 2016, to please register as soon as possible in order to ensure there is a space at available at our school. In order to fully process a registration, documentation of the home address and a photo-copy of the Birth Certificate must accompany a completed registration form. Please pass this information along to friends, neighbors, etc.

Contact the office at 604-792-0681 if you have any questions regarding registration.





### Preschool Information

Please note that although it is only January, our pre-school classes for next year are either presently full or nearing capacity for both age groups. If you were contemplating registering your child in either the 3 year old or 4 year old class, please do so as soon as possible in order to secure a spot for the forth-coming school year. For further information, please contact Cari at 1-877-541-5459 or you can access registration information at [www.windandtide.com](http://www.windandtide.com)

### News from the Gym

Our volleyball teams are presently nearing the end of their season. The boys games are on Tuesdays and the girls play on Wednesdays. Please feel free to come out and cheer our students on. A huge thank you to Mrs. Janzen and Mrs. Cuervo for volunteering their time to coach our girls' team and to Mrs. Bugden for coaching the boys' team. Please look for more information regarding tournament play to arrive in the next week.

For those students in grades 4, 5, and 6, who are interested in playing basketball, please look for more information regarding signups and basketball practices in the next two weeks.



### Upcoming Dates to Remember...

#### *Friday, January 29 – School Spirit Day*

Our school Spirit Day this month is: “Wacky Clothing Day”. Students, staff and all visitors are encouraged to dress “wild” and “colourful” on Friday.

#### *Wednesday, February 3 – DARE Officers Presentations*

We are excited to welcome 6 RCMP officers to our school on Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, as they complete their **DARE** (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program training by making presentations in all of our classrooms from Grades 1-6. The primary goal of this program is to teach effective peer resistance and refusal skills so that children and adolescents can say “NO” to drugs.

#### *Monday, February 8 – Family Day*

All schools in our Province will be closed on February 8<sup>th</sup>, for Family Day.

#### *Monday, February 15 – Parents Advisory Council (PAC) Meeting – 6: 30 pm*

Our second PAC meeting of this calendar year will take place on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. If at all possible, please set some time aside on this evening to come to this meeting, meet your PAC Executive and put forth your ideas, suggestions and opinions towards the different topics being discussed. Remember every parent who has a child attending Little Mountain Elementary School is automatically a member of the PAC. Child-care is being provided by our Leadership students.

#### *Friday, February 19 – Professional Development Day*

School will be closed to students to allow our staff to attend Professional Development opportunities in our district.

#### *Sunday, February 21 – Chilliwack Chiefs Family Night for LME – 5: 00 pm*

All LME families will be receiving hockey tickets to the Chilliwack Chiefs hockey game on Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. After the game, our students are invited to “Skate with the Chiefs” at Prospera as well.



***Monday, February 22 – Professional Development Day – Curriculum Implementation Planning***

Schools in our district will be closed to students on this day to allow each school’s staff to work together familiarizing themselves with the new the Ministry of Education Curriculum guidelines.

***Wednesday February 24 – Anti- Bullying Day – “Together we can make a difference”***



The annual nation-wide Anti-Bullying Day is Wednesday February 24<sup>th</sup>. The theme this year is that “Kindness is one size fits all”, and that we all have the capacity to spread kindness and need to build a movement that lives year round beyond Pink Shirt Day. After all, kindness never goes out of style. In support of this positive initiative, we are asking all students, staff, and visitors to the school to wear “Pink” in support of this event on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

***Friday, February 26 – “NED Show” – 1: 00pm***

The NED show is a fine arts presentation for all student in our school. This character education program centers around a 45 minute assembly called The NED Show. NED is a loveable cartoon character whose name is an acronym for **Never give up, Encourage others, and Do your best.** The NED Show presenters use yo-yo tricks in its assembly performances. By mixing old-fashioned yo-yo fun into each show, they deliver a story and message that’s both entertaining and unforgettable in the minds of the audience. In addition, for one week after the performance, the school will have yo-yos for sale at the office for any students interested in purchasing one.

***Thursday, March 3 – Ready Set Learn Open House 12: 15 pm – 2: 00 pm***

Under the direction of our Kindergarten and Early Learning Staff, we are hosting a Ready-Set-Learn open house at our school on Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 12: 15 p.m. This open house is targeted to the 3 and 4-year-old children in our school community. It is a great opportunity, to have these children connect with their future neighborhood school and to allow parents the opportunity to receive extremely valuable information, in a relaxed setting, about early development and school readiness skills. For parents, there will be handouts and an information kit to take home. For young children, there will be craft activities, snacks, storybooks, workbooks, and stickers. This event will also be an opportunity for parents to meet our Wind & Tide Preschool staff, who have become an integral part of our school. This is an important preschool activity that you won’t want your child to miss!

