

From the principal's desk...

Dear Families:

The Winter Solstice may not have arrived officially on the calendar, but Old Man Winter sure arrived in force this month! For many days this past week or so, we've kept students inside for recess due to single-digit temperatures and accompanying wind chill.

We try to send students outside whenever possible, but we also closely monitor weather conditions to ensure student safety in cold weather. As you know, physical activity and play are important for student learning, but we also need to ensure the safety of our students and playground supervisors. Typically, if the temperature falls to 15 degrees or the wind chill falls below 10, we keep the children inside. Weather conditions change rapidly in Colorado of course, so some grades may go outside while others remain indoors.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all families and staff members who donated a present for our annual Mitten Drive, benefiting less-fortunate families in our community. My favorite parts of this time of year include time with my family and fostering the spirit of giving, and I'm delighted to see that spirit in full force here at Douglass Elementary School! A special thank you to parent Lynne Jones for coordinating this project.

This week, I shared one of my favorite children's book with your teachers. It's called *Ish*, written by Peter Reynolds. I hope you can give it a read as well, because it speaks so well to the way we encourage our children's expression through art and poetry. It shows the love (and tension) among brothers and sisters and about the kind gesture that can change a person's life.

It's a simple story with striking watercolor pictures – and is worth the read. As is usually the case with such simple books, it contains so many vivid messages for us and our kids.

When I visited a fourth-grade classroom this week, I saw students working on poems. Similar to *Ish*, their words may be simple in their poems, but the students' thoughts and emotions shine bright in their work.

I hope that over winter vacation that you can carve out some time for your kids to reflect, maybe with words or with pictures, perhaps both. My point is not to give any homework assignments from the principal's office, but instead to get us all in the habit that Stephen Covey would call "Sharpening the Saw".

Covey's metaphor refers to the time that an experienced woodsman will take to be more productive over the long run –a logger could overuse his saw to the point of breaking it or having to expend much more energy than he would with a sharp saw. But taking the time in the middle of the work to sharpen it makes the job easier.

Whatever "sharpening the saw" looks like for you and your children, be it exercise or pleasure reading or creative writing or art, I hope that some of your vacation can be living "Ish-fully" as the book describes.

I wish you all a happy, safe, and joyful holiday vacation. See you on Wednesday,
January 6!

Your principal,
Jon Wolfer