

Dear Families,

What a month! March was a busy time at Douglass Elementary – CSAP assessments were administered to students in Grades 3, 4 and 5; critical budget decisions were made by our School Accountability Committee; school safety drills were held; St. Patrick’s Day was an exciting event; parents met with teachers to discuss students’ progress as we completed the 2nd trimester; plus, the daily teaching and learning in every classroom! I told the teachers at our meeting yesterday that this spring break is well-earned and -deserved!

Note that spring break begins on March 20, and we return to school on **Wednesday, March 31**. Parent-teacher conferences took place over the course of three evenings earlier in March, so these additional days away from school are “Conference Exchange Days”, which are a nice trade-off for the extra evening hours families and teachers put in this month.

The district calendar for the 2010-11 school year has been posted on Douglass’ web site. As you plan late summer vacations as well as excursions throughout the upcoming school year, I encourage you to limit interruptions to your children’s education – we only have kids for about 175 school days per year; our teaching is enhanced by regular attendance!

As you know, our school improvement goals focus on increasing the achievement of boys in reading and writing – while maintaining the already high achievement of girls. These goals continue to be important as new research is compiled and publicized locally as well as at the state and national level.

This week, I learned about new research completed this year by the Center on Education Policy about national trends in the gender gap. Boys continue to lag girls in reading and writing – while girls and boys have been roughly equivalent in mathematics achievement. The gap is noticeable in elementary school, and then widens dramatically in middle and high school. Click on <http://www.edweek.org/ew/contributors/erik.robelen.html> for the digest of the research, as well as a link to the full report. There’s also a link to state-by-state results.

It’s clear that our work at Douglass, where we are implementing effective instructional strategies that work for both boys and girls, to decrease the gender gap remains important. The above article mentions systemic concerns about education – that it’s time to re-evaluate curriculum as well.

Indeed, one of our focal points has been making our content relevant and meaningful for all students. As a quick personal note – my Kindergartener son wrote a reading response to a book that was assigned to him at his school – his response was “can I have another book next time? This one was too girly.”

I know many of you will encourage your children to read over spring break – let reading be fun for them over vacation! Let them choose books of interest to them, books and magazines that are relevant to them as much as possible.

I wish you all a wonderful spring vacation! We will see you on March 31.

Your principal,
Jon Wolfer