

From the Principal's Desk...

The flu and strep bugs sure picked a tough time of the school year to hit our kids at Douglass. Absences have been higher for the past two weeks – one day over 10 percent of our students were home – due to lots of illnesses. Third graders especially might be feeling the pinch, and since they started CSAP Reading this week, that's especially regrettable.

As a parent and an educator, there's a balance here – yes, we want kids to have regular and excellent attendance, but we also want to keep kids as healthy as possible so that they have the best climate in which to learn. If your child has a fever, they should stay home until 24 hours after the fever has ended. We'd prefer to have your child here to take these required assessments as healthily as possible. We have make-up days for these tests just for this eventuality. So again, our request to parents – testing or not, if your kid is sick, keep them home to recuperate!

For those of us that have escaped these ailments so far, this is a reminder of good hygiene practice - wash hands and surfaces multiple folks touch, cough and sneeze in sleeves, don't share bottles and utensils. Here's hoping an ounce of prevention turns out to be worth a pound of cure!

A few quick traffic and parking requests. First is cell phone usage while driving in the parking lot. There is no state law against cell phones being used in school zones, but there should be. The safety of kids is so important, and inattentive driving is the top cause of accidents. Please, please, please, keep cell phones out of your hands as you drive around school.

Second, I've noticed that the pick-up/drop-off zones have been used as perpendicular parking spaces recently. Remember that those are loading zones, and there are parking spaces for your use during pick-up/drop-off in the north lot. Please use the loading zones as through lanes, and also encourage your kids to enter and exit your cars on the right hand side.

Third, we provide supervision on the playground beginning at 7:45 a.m. For choir members on Tuesday and Thursday, please do not arrive before 7:25 a.m. – we do not have staff supervising until 7:45. Thanks!

Finally, an update on our School Performance Plan goals. Teachers have so many curricular expectations, and many utilize integrated units, where more than one content areas is taught within the same lesson – teaching literacy while reading a non-fiction book about the Civil War in 5th grade, for example. We are using the same strategy with some of our School Performance Planning as 2011 is fully underway – highlighted by our One Book, One Douglass reading.

One of our climate strategies is to increase student leadership – particularly in increasing the favorable response rate to the question “Other people help if they see someone being bullied.” To that end, each classroom will read books with bully prevention themes. In January, classrooms read “Say Something” – focusing on being an ally and encouraging students to take a stand if they see bullying behavior. This month, classrooms are reading “My Secret Bully” which discusses healthy and unhealthy friendships, as well as encouraging students to not keep bullying a secret from their parents. It also has the protagonist engaged in creative problem-solving and role-playing to address her secret bully.

In addition to reading the story aloud to the class, there will be follow-up writing activities for each book that the classes read. We expect to see authentic writing responses from our kids, addressing both our achievement and our climate goals.

Your principal,
Jon Wolfer