

From the principal's desk...

It was a pleasure to represent Douglass teachers and families this week, along with Mr. Cendali, as we accepted the 2010 National Blue Ribbon Award in Washington, D.C. The award is now proudly hanging outside the front office, and the Blue Ribbon flag is flying high under the American flag at school as well. I'd like to extend my deep appreciation to our PTO for making this trip happen – we had a wonderful time at this national celebration, meeting Congressman Jared Polis, and dialoguing with other national winners.

Teachers send home the first trimester report cards today. An important reminder to all families is to avoid equating 4, 3, 2, 1 with A, B, C, or D. As we have raised our expectations of students and teachers, this report card reflects that rise. A “3” is a great score to receive because it means that your child is consistently meeting these higher expectations. Similarly, a “2” on this first trimester report card is an indicator that your child may not be meeting those expectations consistently. If you have concerns about these progress indicators, your teachers are the experts in interpreting these scores and marks.

Our school improvement plan was distributed to families on October 8, 2010, through this bi-monthly school newsletter. The feedback I received directly from families all regarded the Climate Goal and continuing to be proactive in our efforts to prevent bullying at our school in the interest of a safe learning environment for all children.

At Douglass, we have implemented “Bully-Proofing Your School”, which has specific age-appropriate lessons that each teacher leads in their classroom. These lessons range from skills for students to create a caring classroom community, to the difference between a conflict between students and a situation where bullying behavior is present, to teaching skills for students to use if they feel they are being bullied. Teachers will communicate the specific lessons to you in upcoming classroom newsletters.

On the school bus, we benefit from drivers who care deeply about the kids they transport to and from school each day. Several have already taken steps to implement seating charts, or to pair older students with younger students. I meet informally with the bus drivers regularly and monthly in a more formal setting to hear how things are going.

As at school, behavior that is unsafe on the bus cannot be tolerated. Bus drivers will give a student a verbal warning if there is unsafe behavior, followed by an assigned seat for three days or more if the behavior does not improve. Parents are also contacted at their stop. If behavior does not improve, the driver will send a report to me for action, which typically results in a suspension of bus privileges for a period of time.

Fortunately, the numbers of times we resort to such a serious consequence is very small. But the safety and welfare of all children is paramount. And working together, we can continue to create a safe learning environment to, from, and at school.

On behalf of the teachers and staff at Douglass Elementary, enjoy this Thanksgiving Vacation! There is no school for students until Monday, November 29.

Your principal,
Jon Wolfer