

Happy Holidays!

THE MUSTANG

Home of the Shepherd Mustangs

December 17, 2012



- ▶ Wed., Dec. 19: School Improvement Team meeting, 5:30 p.m., school library
- ▶ Thurs., Dec. 20: International Day
- ▶ Mon., Dec. 24-Sun., Jan. 6: Winter Break

- ▶ Mon., Jan. 7: Back to school!
- ▶ Tues., Jan. 8: Family Dinner Night, Spring Garden Chinese Restaurant, 8613 16th St., Silver Spring, 5-9 p.m.
- ▶ Wed., Jan. 9: LSAT meeting, 4 p.m.

Consult the school website, www.shepherd-elementary.org, for a full array of events and happenings throughout the school year!

From the PTA President



Dear Shepherd Elementary School Community:

It is hard to believe that 2012 is coming to a close. On behalf of the PTA, I wish all students, parents, guardians, family members, teachers, and staff a joyous holiday season and a fruitful new year in 2013.

During this season of giving and caring, please consider extending your generosity to our wonderful school. Shepherd is a thriving public elementary school, featuring a comprehensive, high-quality International Baccalaureate education, along with music, art, and two foreign languages. This does not happen accidentally; it takes a caring and dedicated staff and faculty, involved and committed families, and resources for our teachers and students.

As the school's budget gets tighter, however, teachers and staff are being asked to do more with less. This is

(see PTA President, p. 5)

A Word from Mrs. Miles!

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we approach this holiday season, permit me the opportunity to wish each of you a joyous holiday season and prosperous New Year. We have accomplished a lot and we are only four days away from bringing the first part of the 2012-13 school year to a successful close, and for that I am grateful and excited! It is my hope that we will all spend the two weeks away from the hustle and bustle of school to relax, reflect and rejuvenate. I am looking forward to continuing the momentum as we enter 2013.



Get Caught Reading Strategies

The other day a student escorted his classmate to the main office after his classmate's name was called to the main office to receive a Get Caught Reading award. Sadly, the boy (the girl's walking partner) looked at me and said, "I will never receive a prize." When asked why, his reply: "No one will read with me at home and I need help reading." As you can imagine, this broke my heart. Before me stood a young man who was eager and excited about reading but, according to the student, no adult was willing to help him read. Is this your student? What story will your student tell others? I cannot emphasize enough the importance of reading with your student every night and taking time to engage in dialogue about what they are reading no matter the grade. I get it: We all get busy and I am certainly guilty of missing a night of reading with my daughter before she goes to bed. However, I do not and I will not let this become a pattern of behavior. I would like the stories told by my daughter at school to be one I can be proud of as a parent. Please do not allow the winter break to pass without taking time to listen to your child, read to -- and with -- your child, and take time to ask questions about what your child is reading.

(see MILES, p. 6)

TV-VG Turnoff Club Adds New Members

It seems as if no issue of the Mustang would be complete without include still more members of the TV-Video Game Turnoff Club. Here are the latest four, and what they say they'll do with the time they'll spend NOT watching TV or playing video games:



"I play after school, build and play with my Legos, draw and read."—Zoe McCullough, fourth grade

"Read, help with chores."—Aidan Alston, first grade

"Reading, do math and talk to my family about my schoolwork."—Lattera Dakka, second grade

"Learn my alphabet, numbers and drawing."—Citani Dakka, pre-K

Look for a bulletin board in the school festooned with pictures of the earliest TV-VG Turnoff Club members before winter break begins.

If you want your child to join the club, simply print the membership application found on the school website at <http://www.shepherd-elementary.org/school-life/tv-turnoff/> and have them fill it out. Once that's done, all you need do is slip the completed sheet into the PTA mailbox.

The SIT-uation Room

Promises, promises: We've been pledging to finish our document detailing the Shepherd Elementary community's desires and priorities for school renovations – which WILL take place over the summer. But we do believe we'll have it ready before winter break. And, once approved, we'll get it posted on the website and the PTA listserv for all to see.

Last Tuesday, representatives from D.C. Public Schools and D.C.'s Department of General Services, along with Vince Bailey Architects -- with offices in Shepherd Park! -- met with Principal Miles and two members of the School Improvement Team in a combined meet-and-greet sit-down meeting plus walk-through of the school. Fortunately, many classrooms were empty due to field trips so the visitors could get a better handle on what kinds of renovations are needed and how they can be achieved.

The School Improvement Team itself met last Wednesday to do some of that document-finalizing work. What wasn't settled on was assigned to different members for their input.

Shepherd's SIT group will have a joint meeting this coming Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 5:30 p.m. with many of the same players who visited Shepherd last Tuesday. Once winter break is over, the work will accelerate, and we'll do our best to keep you informed of events as they develop. If you can't wait to learn more, call SIT chair Mark Pattison at 202-829-9289.

Family Dinner Night: Mmm, Mmm, Good!

Our latest Family Dinner Night, at The Society Restaurant, was a good time for all who attended. They got to taste some spicy jerk chicken and groove to the sounds of a duo that blasted out everything from Chuck Brown to Elton John to Prince to Santana and Cameo on a night smokin' with 1970s and '80s classics.

The next Family Dinner Night will be a return to the Spring Garden Chinese Restaurant, 8613 16th St. in Silver Spring, on Tuesday, January 8. If you haven't been there before, it's inside the Spring Center strip mall. Hours are 5-9 p.m. There's terrifically tasty Chinese food, and sushi too! And there are plenty of tables for Shepherd families to dine at. That's a good thing, because this Family Dinner night is dine-in only; no carryouts! Tell your server "I'm with Shepherd!" and the PTA will get 20 percent back from your pre-tax tab. Last school year, we raised \$300 from our trip to Spring Garden, and changed a few families' Chinese dining habits in the process. Let's pack the place!





Happy Holidays, Shepherd Mustangs!!!

I would like to let everyone know about Geo-Plunge. GeoPlunge is a fun and educational activity. In GeoPlunge we play three games: Guess the State, Race For the Borders, and Play the Rankings. In Guess the State, you get clues and try to guess which state is being described. In Race For the Borders, each team must find two matches of three states that share a border. Play the Rankings is similar to the "I Declare War" card game but you have to have the lowest cards instead of the highest.

This has been a fun way to learn facts about geography. We practice every day at recess and after school. The students who are on the Geo-Plunge team are: Taye Moss-Suggs, Godloves Tata, Gavin Rasmussen, Colyar Trimble, Savannah Waymer, Quentin Anderson-Watson, Margaret Goletiani, Chima Ukaegbu, and myself. We are very nervous about our tournament in January.

I hope everyone enjoys their holidays! Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa and Happy Hanukkah to all!

--London Downing, fourth-grader

'Log' On!

With a two-week winter break approaching, it's no time to slow the Get Caught Reading momentum. In fact, use the time to BUILD momentum for reading at home or while away.

Pick up enough Reading Response Logs this week at school to carry you through winter break. And, if you forget, you can always print some from the homepage of the school website, www.shepherd-elementary.org.

Local School Advisory Team Report

Shepherd's Local School Advisory Team met last Tuesday, Dec. 11. There were three critical components to the meeting.

First up was a discussion of commuting to school with Shepherd parent Jim Elliott, who is part of a group called Safe Routes to School. Safety is paramount when we take our children to school and pick them up, and it may be possible to encourage more walking and bicycling to school, and greater use of carpooling and public transit, to relieve some of the choke points of congestion during the morning dropoff and the afternoon pickup.

The LSAT also conducted an extensive discussion on community engagement – not always the easiest thing to achieve when just 30 percent of the student population lives in the Shepherd Park neighborhood. But there is a commitment to develop and implement strategies that give neighbors a sense of having a greater stake in the school. To that end, a Strategic Planning subcommittee was formed consisting of LSAT chair Sherilyn Pruitt, parent representative Kesha Pendergrast, community representative Carl Bergman, Principal Miles, and a to-be-named representative of the PTA.

Last but not least was a thorough discussion of "culture and climate" at Shepherd. Among the major points raised during this part of the meeting were: The PTA should use concerts and school-wide events to do outreach to all Shepherd parents; personal contacts are helpful, but broad appeals are less so; and even something as simple as nametags to put names to faces helps.

The next LSAT meeting will take place Wednesday, Jan. 9, at 4 p.m. at the school. All parents are invited, although they may be asked to leave if confidential matters arise.

Shepherd Parents Stand Up

(Editor's note: *This is the last of three installments of Shepherd parent and community testimony on the School Boundary Review Act of 2012. A working group formed to mobilize on the issue will continue to monitor developments both at the legislative level within the D.C. Council, and at the administrative level at the DCPS chancellor's office.*)

My child has attended Shepherd Elementary for the past six years. As his time at Shepherd pulls to a close, I am beyond satisfied with the quality of education that he has received, as well as the life experiences that he has shared with teachers, staff and his friends. More importantly, I can firmly say that he is well prepared to transition to Deal Middle School.

Before the Boundary and Feeder Pattern debate was brought to surface, I had not done the level of research necessary for the determination of a suitable middle school choice. Should I move Quentin to a charter base approach for the next phase of his education, should I continue with public, or can I sacrifice and send him to a private school? I had no real answer, but many questions. The School Boundary Review Act of 2012 (legislation number B19-0734) forced me to answer those questions.

In searching for those answers, what was reaffirmed to me was the importance of choice. My opposition to legislation B19-0734 is firmly grounded in the knowing that our choices would be limited. Whether public, charter, or private, the educational direction that we will choose will be built on the foundation of continuity. Many families choose Deal because it provides the continuity an opportunity for Shepherd students to thrive. Shepherd students perform to high standards comparable to Deal. In 2012 69% of Shepherd students met or exceeded the math standards on the DC-CAS (compared to 85% at Deal), and 76% met or exceeded the reading standards (compared to 82% at Deal). Shepherd's reading test scores are almost three times higher than those at the closest middle school to Shepherd. Therefore, despite its proximity to Shepard, that middle schools' low test scores assures that it could not provide academic continuity to Shepherd students.

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on the DC CAS for 2012

	Shepherd ES	Deal MS	MacFarland MS
Math	69%	85%	34%
Reading	76%	82%	27%

Source: DCPS.dc.gov

Shepherd is a high-performing school with an IB curriculum that Deal matches at the middle-school level. In 2006, Shepherd began pursuing the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP), which offers a rigorous curriculum and an inquiry-based approach to learning that is designed to meet children's academic, social, physical, emotional, and cultural needs. Shepherd was authorized as an IB PYP school in 2011. Shepherd's five-year-old programme serves as an excellent introduction to the Middle Years Programme at Deal. And Deal's programme offers important academic continuity to Shepherd students. I am proud to say that the approach that was taken in preparing our community for the hearing was truly effective. Words cannot express the depth of appreciation for the focus group that committed so many hours to making certain that we spoke as a strategically cohesive voice. I am also grateful to the many parents that testified and/or submitted their written testimonies. Most importantly, I am gratefully that we came together as a community to uniformly advocate for Shepherd students.

Unfortunately the boundary and feeder pattern debate has not come to an end; understanding this reality, we must continue to diligently advocate for Shepherd ES. We must continue to commit ourselves to ensuring that our academic choices are not limited. At the January PTA meeting you can expect to receive an update regarding our next steps and how you can play a role in ensuring that Shepherd ES remains a feeder school to Deal MS.

I pray that the holidays bring you utmost joy and peace. And I look forward to your renewed commitment to Shepherd ES this upcoming year.

Thank you.

--ALICIA ANDERSON



Shepherd IB PYP Corner

We began Unit 3 of our Programme of Inquiry last week. This unit will continue until Feb. 1. The themes for each grade level are as follows.

- ◆ Pre Kindergarten & Kindergarten: Who We Are -- An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities and cultures; rights and responsibilities and what it means to be human.
- ◆ First & Fifth Grade: How We Express Ourselves -- An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.
- ◆ Second & Third Grade: How the World Works -- An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.
- ◆ Fourth Grade: Where We Are in Place and Time -- An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.

Our fifth grade students have begun working with an artist from the Kennedy Center during this third unit. This third unit is the start of the Fifth Grade Exhibition. The PYP Exhibition is a culminating experience for students in their final year of the Primary Years Programme. This experience will give students the opportunity to exhibit their learning of the essential elements of the PYP. The Exhibition represents a significant event in the life of an IB PYP school, the student and the whole school community. More information about Exhibition will be provided in the upcoming weeks.

PTA President from p. 1_____

where the PTA steps in and why contributions to the PTA are so vitally important. Funding from the PTA helps provide curriculum resources, music and arts supplies, and technology equipment, to name just a few examples. This year we have already purchased 24 Kindles, currently being used in the upper grades' math curriculum, and have allocated \$1,000 to each grade and \$500 for each "special" subject to fulfill teacher wish lists for curricula and much needed supplies.



All families with students at the school are members of the PTA, regardless of their ability to contribute – but we do ask that every family contribute as much as they are able. The suggested annual contribution amount is \$180 – a dollar for each day of school – thus the name "180 Fund." But, whether you can contribute more or less, all contributions are welcomed and appreciated.

If you have made your contribution for the 2012-13 school year, thank you! If you haven't – or maybe you would like to increase your contribution – please consider making a contribution today to the 180 Fund. The PTA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so your contributions are tax deductible.

As 2012 comes to a close and you are considering your year-end giving, please remember the Shepherd PTA. An investment in our school is an investment in your children -- that will pay dividends for years to come!

With much appreciation,
Alicia Anderson

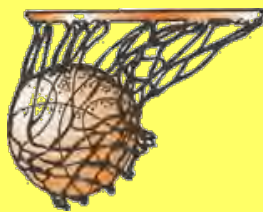
President, Shepherd Elementary School PTA

International Day will be this Thursday, Dec. 20. It will begin in the morning starting in the auditorium with a small set of international dances. The rest of the day, classes will participate in educational and interactive holiday displays from countries around the world. Please join us!

Happy Holidays!

--*Ms. Sandra Hart*, IB Coordinator

Catch Boys' Hoops Action



The boys' basketball team at Shepherd are road warriors this season, playing all their games on the road. All games will be played on Thursdays unless otherwise noted, and all games start at 4 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Give those Mustangs a big hand!

- ⇒ Dec. 20: Shepherd at West, 1338 Farragut St. NW
- ⇒ Friday, Jan. 11: Shepherd at Key, 5001 Dana Pl. NW
- ⇒ Jan. 17: Shepherd at Whittier, 6201 Fifth St. NW
- ⇒ Jan. 24: Shepherd at Cooke, 2525 17th St. NW
- ⇒ Jan. 31, 5 p.m.: Shepherd vs. Hyde-Addison at Lafayette, 5707 Broad Branch Rd. NW.
- ⇒ Feb. 7: Shepherd at Janney, 4130 Albemarle St. NW.

MILES from p. 1

A Review of Reading Strategies

- *Visualize* - to create a mental pictures while you read.
- *Question* - to figure out a part of the story you did not understand
- *Predict and Infer* - to use what we have read and know to learn more than what the author tells us.
- *Make Connections* - to connect what you read to your life. It may have happened to you, a friend, or you may have read about it somewhere.
- *Summarize* - to tell, in your own words, what has happened in the story.
- *Making Judgments* - to use facts from the story, and our beliefs, to make and confirm opinions about the characters situations.

(See PRINCIPAL, p. 12)

FAMILY DINNER NIGHT

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FAMILY DINNER NIGHT



Spring Garden Chinese Restaurant

8613 16th St., Silver Spring
(inside the Spring Center strip mall)

Tuesday, January 8
5-9 p.m.



→ **SAY "I'M WITH SHEPHERD!"** ←
The PTA gets 20% of your pre-tax bill!

*Tasty Chinese food
and sushi, too!*



Good for Dine-In Only!

International Day is Thursday!

Shepherd's annual International Day, in which we celebrate our many and diverse cultures and traditions, will be this Thursday, Dec. 20. Here's the lineup of feasts and festivals that classrooms will be presenting:



- ◆ Ms. Gibbs and Ms. Holt- Christmas U.S.A.
- ◆ Ms. Pethtel- Christmas (Eritrea or Canada)
- ◆ Ms. Guldin- Las Posadas (Mexico)
- ◆ Ms. Goldman- Hannukah (Israel)
- ◆ Ms. Hill-Dyal- Ramadan (Muslims)
- ◆ Ms. Johnson- Mardi Gras
- ◆ Ms. George- Diwali (India)
- ◆ Ms. Ulba- St. Lucia's Day (Sweden)
- ◆ Ms. Mackenzie- St. Nicholas' Day (Holland/Dutch)
- ◆ Ms. Wren- Christmas in Africa
- ◆ Ms. Valentine-Nelson- Eid
- ◆ Ms. Charles- Kwanzaa (African American)
- ◆ Ms. Miranda-Mulligan- Epiphany/Three Kings Day
- ◆ Ms. Thomas- Chinese New Year (China)
- ◆ Mr. Leonard- Lunar New Year
- ◆ Ms. Laughinghouse- Winter Solstice
- ◆ Madame Gadie- Christmas in France
- ◆ Senorita Martinez-Christmas in Spain

Parents: If you can help out during International Day, let your teacher know. If you can't get hold of your teacher directly, then get in touch with your classroom parent. Many hands make light work!



Dear Shepherd Parents and Caregivers—

Our first through fifth graders have been busy in art ever since the Holiday Concert with a generous task for the residents of the Old Soldiers' Home. Parent Neela Banerjee (mother of Radha) enlisted my help in the creation of greeting cards for veterans there, with the overflow going to those in active combat. I happily took it on with the thought of keeping "that holiday thing" going. And, so did our students! They outdid themselves writing kind messages to the military members who have served us so well. Two classes, Ms. Whren's third graders and Ms. Charles' fourth graders, even made two cards each.

One fourth grader was reduced to tears at the thought of repeating this exercise because it reminded him of his late grandpa who was a veteran. When I told him he didn't have to make a second card, he chose to push right on making one anyway, and including an eloquent, heartfelt message. He is a true example of the pure kindness of children.

After the shooting in Connecticut it is difficult to write about the joy of holiday season. Dr. Nancy Schnyderman of NBC urges us to talk in age-appropriate ways to our kids about this tragedy, answering only what is asked. Also she advises us to turn off the TV and other media to limit the exposure our kids have to the grim event. She also suggests letting children draw or use other art to express what they are experiencing. (If not for the Christmas bustle I would be running to MY studio.) Art-making is a great tool for going through difficult times. It is only one reason I want to teach something about art that kids can hold on to for their entire lives.

Hug your children. They are our treasures, our art. Buy them art supplies and let them go. It can be thrilling to watch them create, express, and learn.

For students in third, fourth and fifth grades, there is homework due the week of Jan. 7.

After Dec. 20, LOOK FOR PHOTOS OF HOLIDAY CARD MAKING AND MORE AT

<http://teacherweb.com/DC/Shepherd/Art> and click on GALLERY and ART PEEKS.

Have a Happy Holiday Season.

--Ms. Joele Michaud, art teacher

The Handbook Says: More On Shepherd's Discipline Policy

Teaching School-Wide Expected Behaviors
Be Respectful -- Be Responsible -- Be Safe

When introducing behavioral expectations, follow these basic steps:

Step 1: Access prior knowledge of behavioral expectations for specific setting.

Step 2: Identify expected behaviors for specific setting.

Step 3: Model expected behaviors for specific setting.

- ◆ Be Respectful
- ◆ Be Responsible
- ◆ Be Safe

Step 4: Have students practice the expected behaviors.

Step 5: Review expectations for specific setting.

Lesson 1

Cafeteria Expectations

Be Respectful -- Be Responsible -- Be Safe

Be Safe in the cafeteria:

- ◆ Hands, feet & objects to self
- ◆ Eat your own food
- ◆ Raise hand for permission to be excused
- ◆ Walk

Be Responsible in the cafeteria:

- ◆ Know cafeteria number
- ◆ Get everything you need while in the serving zone
- ◆ Focus on eating first
- ◆ Follow cafeteria procedures*
- ◆ Clean up after yourself
- ◆ Use table manners

Be Respectful in the cafeteria:

- ◆ Wait your turn
- ◆ Use a soft voice
- ◆ Respond to teachers' signal for silence
- ◆ Give your attention to the cafeteria personnel while in serving zone
- ◆ Say please and thank you in the serving zone
- ◆ Keep silent in serving zone
- ◆ Respect others' personal space

Cafeteria Procedures

Be Respectful -- Be Responsible -- Be Safe

- ◆ Enter the cafeteria quietly.
- ◆ Students buying lunch — stand in line quietly, keeping hands and feet to self.
- ◆ Keep silent in the serving zone.
- ◆ Give your attention to the cafeteria personnel.
- ◆ Use manners in the serving line.
- ◆ Walk to your table.
- ◆ Remain seated facing forward.
- ◆ Use a soft voice
- ◆ Talk only to those across and next to you.
- ◆ For teacher's assistance, raise your hand and wait.
- ◆ Eat your food only.
- ◆ Use good table manners.
- ◆ When finished, pick up all trash, sit and wait for teacher's permission to throw trash away and return lunch tray.
- ◆ Put all uneaten food and trash into the trash can carefully.
- ◆ Pick up any food or trash you drop on the floor at the trash can.
- ◆ Walk in a single file line out of the cafeteria.

CAFETERIA PROCEDURES FOR VOICE CONTROL

Green Light: soft voice talking (talk to the persons to your left, right or across from you)

Yellow Light: whisper talk (talk to the person on your left or right only)

Red Light: no talking

Classes begin with a green light signal indicating students may talk softly. If the noise level increases, the traffic signal will turn yellow indicating that students are "too loud." Students must lower their voices and whisper. After five minutes of whisper talk, the green light will reappear and students may talk softly. If noise level increases again or if students fail to lower their voices when the yellow signal is given, the traffic light will turn red to indicate no talking. After five minutes of no talking, the traffic signal will turn green and students may resume talking. If noise level at that table increases beyond whisper talk a second time, there will be no talking in the cafeteria for the remainder of the lunch period. Individual students not following cafeteria procedures will be removed to a separate table for the remainder of the lunch period.

Teachers and support staff should actively monitor the tables for which they are responsible by walking up and down the aisle between the tables. However, if a student at another table demonstrates inappropriate behavior, any staff member should intercede. Monitors are not allowed to sit during duty.

(see PROCEDURES p. 9)

Shepherd School Pledge

Today is a new day!

I will respect the rights of others.

I will treat all property with respect.

I will take responsibility for my learning.

I will take responsibility for my actions.

I will act in a safe and healthy way.

Today I will be the best me I can be!



PROCEDURES from p. 8 _____

CAFETERIA PROCEDURES FOR FORGOTTEN ITEMS

In order to alleviate students returning to the cafeteria line for forgotten items, a basket with ketchup, straws, napkins and plasticware will be available at the end of each table. Students will be responsible for going to the end of the table for forgotten items. Students must raise their hand to request permission to return to the serving line for any additional reason.

Lesson 2

Hallway Expectations

Be Respectful -- Be Responsible -- Be Safe

Be Respectful in the hallway:

- ◆ Respect others' personal space
- ◆ Use soft voice
- ◆ Walk silently when with your class

Be Responsible in the hallway:

- ◆ Keep backpack closed
- ◆ Stay with your class
- ◆ Go directly to your destination
- ◆ Be Safe in the hallway:
- ◆ In groups of more than two, walk single file
- ◆ Hands, feet & objects to self
- ◆ Walk on the right of the hallway
- ◆ Look straight ahead

(To see the entire discipline policy, go to the "Parents" toolbar on the homepage of the school website, www.shepherd-elementary.org, then click on "Discipline Policy.")

International Days



We in the United States are a melting pot, a veritable stew of peoples. We also get to observe and celebrate many holidays. But, in light of the upcoming International Day at school Dec. 20, let's take a look at some national holidays celebrated by other nations during the second half of December.

- **Dec. 22:** National Unity Day (Zimbabwe).
- **Dec. 24:** Holy Night (Liechtenstein).
- **Dec. 25:** Birthday Anniversary of Quaid-a-Azam (Pakistan).
- **Dec. 26:** A second day of Christmas (Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Namibia, Netherlands, Poland); a third day of Christmas (Latvia, Slovakia); St. Stephen's Day (Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Andorra); Boxing Day (Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominica, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Iceland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Malawi, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, Sweden, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe); Day of Goodwill (South Africa); Independence Day (Slovenia).
- **Dec. 30:** Jose Rizal Day (Philippines).
- **Dec. 31:** Solidarity Day of the Azeri People (Azerbaijan); Bank Holiday (Japan, El Salvador).

Although school will be on winter break, your Mustang team will be at work putting together a newsletter for the first day back. Deadline is Friday, Jan. 4, at 5 p.m.

Send all material to sesmustang@gmail.com.

Newsletter
DEADLINE

A National Tragedy: Helping Children Cope

Tips for Parents and Teachers

Whenever a national tragedy occurs such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters, children, like many people, may be confused or frightened. Most likely they will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children cope first and foremost by establishing a sense of safety and security. As more information becomes available, adults can continue to help children work through their emotions and perhaps even use the process as a learning experience.

All Adults Should:

- ▶ **Model calm and control.** Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Avoid appearing anxious or frightened.
- ▶ **Reassure children that they are safe** and (if true) so are the other important adults in their lives. Depending on the situation, point out factors that help insure their immediate safety and that of their community.
- ▶ **Remind them that trustworthy people are in charge.** Explain that the government emergency workers, police, firefighters, doctors, and the military are helping people who are hurt and are working to ensure that no further tragedies occur.
- ▶ **Let children know that it is okay to feel upset.** Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy like this occurs. Let children talk about their feelings and help put them into perspective. Even anger is okay, but children may need help and patience from adults to assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
- ▶ **Observe children's emotional state.** Depending on their age, children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of grief, anxiety or discomfort.

Children will express their emotions differently. There is no right or wrong way to feel or express grief.

- ▶ **Look for children at greater risk.** Children who have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Be particularly observant for those who may be at risk of suicide. Seek the help of mental health professional if you are at all concerned.
- ▶ **Tell children the truth.** Don't try to pretend the event has not occurred or that it is not serious. Children are smart. They will be more worried if they think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening.
- ▶ **Stick to the facts.** Don't embellish or speculate about what has happened and what might happen. Don't dwell on the scale or scope of the tragedy, particularly with young children.
- ▶ **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.** *Early elementary school children* need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that the daily structures of their lives will not change. *Upper elementary and early middle school children* will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. *Upper middle school and high school students* will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence and threats to safety in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. They will be more committed to doing something to help the victims and affected community. **For all children, encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!**

(see TIPS, p. 11)

TIPS from p. 10 _____

- ▶ **Monitor your own stress level.** Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief and anger. Talking to friends, family members, religious leaders, and mental health counselors can help. It is okay to let your children know that you are sad, but that you believe things will get better. You will be better able to support your children if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner. Get appropriate sleep, nutrition and exercise.

What Parents Can Do:

- ▶ Focus on your children over the week following the tragedy. Tell them you love them and everything will be okay. Try to help them understand what has happened, keeping in mind their developmental level.
- ▶ Make time to talk with your children. Remember: If you do not talk to your children about this incident someone else will. Take some time and determine what you wish to say.
- ▶ Stay close to your children. Your physical presence will reassure them and give you the opportunity to monitor their reaction. Many children will want actual physical contact. Give plenty of hugs. Let them sit close to you, and make sure to take extra time at bedtime to cuddle and to reassure them that they are loved and safe.
- ▶ Limit your child's television viewing of these events. If they must watch, watch with them for a brief time; then turn the set off. Don't sit mesmerized re-watching the same events over and over again.
- ▶ Maintain a "normal" routine. To the extent possible stick to your family's normal routine for dinner, homework, chores, bedtime, etc., **but don't be inflexible.** Children may have a hard time concentrating on schoolwork or falling asleep at night.
- ▶ Spend extra time reading or playing quiet games with your children before bed. These

activities are calming, foster a sense of closeness and security, and reinforce a sense of normalcy. Spend more time tucking them in. Let them sleep with a light on if they ask for it.

- ▶ Safeguard your children's physical health. Stress can take a physical toll on children as well as adults. Make sure your children get appropriate sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
- ▶ Consider praying or thinking hopeful thoughts for the victims and their families. It may be a good time to take your children to your place of worship, write a poem, or draw a picture to help your child express their feelings and feel that they are somehow supporting the victims and their families.
- ▶ Find out what resources your school has in place to help children cope. Most schools are likely to be open and often are a good place for children to regain a sense of normalcy. Being with their friends and teachers can help. Schools should also have a plan for making counseling available to children and adults who need it.

-- This article comes from the [National Association of School Psychologists](#).

CLIP & EARN \$\$ FOR SHEPHERD

As you do holiday grocery shopping, be sure to look for your favorite brands that participate in Box Tops for Education.

Pillsbury, Green Giant, Land O' Lakes, Yoplait, Gold Medal, Bisquick and Betty Crocker are just some of the participating



brands. Just put your clipped Box Tops into a Ziploc-style sandwich-size bag and include your child's name, teacher and grade. Then, after winter break, put them into the Box Tops Box in the school office. Box Tops for Education is an

easy way to earn money for our school!



PRINCIPAL from p. 9 _____

A Day On, Not A Day Off

Friday, Dec. 14, was a professional development day for staff. The majority of the day was spent helping teachers learn more about how to help students develop a deeper understanding in mathematics. Teachers watched videos and engaged in hands-on activities that provided them with opportunities to increase their knowledge of what it means to develop a deeper understanding. In addition to the work around math, teachers also spent time looking at students' most recent assessment results and discussing assessments and reteaching. Specialist and support personnel spent the day off site engaged in job-specific learning.

Safety and Security (Active Shooter)

As we reflect on the tragic event that occurred this past Friday in Connecticut, we are reminded of the importance of safety and use this opportunity to review our safety protocol if faced with an active shooter or armed subject, the following steps are taken:

- Remain calm
- Announce the school is on "lockdown"
- Call 911 and clearly indicate that there is an "Active Shooter"
- Provide the name, location, and telephone number of your school
- Move away from the school building and down to the lower field or across the street down Jonquil or Kalmia if we are outside when we go into lockdown.
- Remain in classrooms, lock or secure the doors, stay away from windows and glass
- Cover doors and windows
- Get out of the hallway and proceed quickly to the nearest classroom closet or office space
- Pull students, staff or visitors in the hallway into the nearest classroom, office or closet
- Remain quiet and still
- Await direction from law enforcement officials
- Remain calm

Parents will be notified via phone and email. Our off-site evacuation site is Tifereth Israel Synagogue located on 16th Street.

How We Respond and Help Students to Cope

At Shepherd we will reassure students that they are safe. We will not make any public announcements about the events. We will review our safety protocols and procedures. We will allow students to lead us. If they want to take action such as making cards and sending letters, we will allow them. If students ask questions, we will provide them with age-appropriate activities and discussions. We will have our support personnel available to talk with any student who may need additional support or help coping. As a parent if you have questions about how to best address your student's questions or concerns, please see "A National Tragedy: Helping Children Cope" on page 10. In addition, our support personnel -- Dr. Mallory- Powell (our school psychologist) and Ms. Liggins (our school counselor) -- are available. Hold your loved one close and hug our babies tight as we continue to keep the Sandy Hook Elementary School family in Newtown, Conn., in our thoughts.

Happy Holidays,

Jamie B. Miles

Principal

Shepherd Elementary School Mission:

At Shepherd, we are committed to the advancement of students' academic, emotional, social and physical well being. We, as a community, will provide students with a safe, supportive, creative, and flexible environment in which children think and learn globally and act compassionately.

Shepherd Elementary School



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