



December 16, 2009

From the Principal's Desk –

As the holiday season nears, the decisions about presents for the kids are made. One gift that you can give this holiday season, and all year long, is your time. It doesn't cost and can be given every day. Time spent with children is far more valuable than words or presents.

Many parents spend only a few minutes a day in actual conversation with their children. Most of the time is spent telling children what they are and are not permitted to do. Since little time may be spent in true communication, children may feel unimportant and feel that their parents do not care about them.

Here are some ways to give the gift of time to your children:

1. When children bring papers home from school, take time to look at them. Talk positively about their efforts. Remember that these papers represent an investment of hard work.
2. Take time to read to children. This can be a time of sharing and relaxing together.
3. Play with children. This will let them know that their world is important to you.
4. When children begin to read, have them read to you. They will enjoy sitting at the table reading aloud while you prepare dinner.
5. Discuss good and bad things that happened to each of you that day. Begin a collection which can be shared over the years.

Time is one of the most precious gifts you can give to someone you love. Don't let time slip by without letting them know you truly care about them.

On behalf of the entire staff of Sarah Smith Elementary School, I wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season!

Great Books Atlanta –

Give yourself a gift for the holidays. For the first time, the Great Books Foundation will be sponsoring a Great Books weekend featuring Shared Inquiry discussions between teachers and parents. Also included are cultural and educational opportunities to enrich and extend the discussions. The event is being held at the Piedmont Center near the school. As the host school for this event, I hope that many Sarah Smith parents will be able to attend and experience this wonderful opportunity. It will be a great way to see the methods the teachers are using with the students at Sarah Smith to promote shared inquiry discussions. The cost of the event is \$295.00. This includes participation in all Great Books Atlanta activities, books for discussion, a continental breakfast both days, and all tickets.

It's Time to Move –

Excitement is in the air around Sarah Smith Elementary. We've had a great first semester and now we are amazed to realize that we only have two days left before we begin the next chapter of the Sarah Smith Story. As most of you are aware, we will begin our transition to the new campus Saturday, December 19, 2009. Thanks very much to all teachers and paraprofessionals who have worked diligently to prepare for the move while, at the same time, maintaining quality instruction for the students. Thanks, also, to the parent volunteers who have helped during this very busy time. Thanks to everyone for your patience and understanding as we create this "next chapter." There will be a lot of challenges ahead, so flexibility is going to be very important. Compare this to the time you moved into your new house and all the things that had to be "figured out." It will take time, so thanks for being patient with us as we continue with our mission.

In an effort to ensure a smooth transition, we will be holding an Open House for you and the students on Tuesday, January 5, 2010. Open House for the families of students in Kindergarten will take place between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. at the Primary Campus. Grades 3-5 will take place from 1:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the Intermediate Campus. This will allow students and parents the opportunity to find their classrooms prior to returning to school Wednesday, January 6, 2010. This is only a "drop by" visit. Teachers will be very busy and will not have a chance to meet with the students or parents. Thank you for respecting their time and work. Also, please be aware of the parking situation, as it is very limited.

Please know that we are committed to making sure that both campuses are ready to receive students on the first day back to school. If you have questions or need assistance during that time you may reach me by calling the school at 404.802.3850. Please let me know if you have any questions or need more clarity about our move. (sbaker@atlantapublicschools.us)

Campus Assignments –

Bobbie Martin and Celeste Rasheed will serve as secretaries of the Primary Campus. Angela Rush and Kathy Johnson will serve as secretaries of the Intermediate Campus. Mr. Usher will be housed at the Primary Campus and Dr. Hamilton will be housed at the Intermediate Campus. Connie Wallace (Food Service Manager) will remain on the Primary Campus but will oversee both campuses food service programs. Those serving both campuses (housed at both sites) are Dr. Baker, Dr. Abby McKinnon (Instructional Specialist), Jessica Harron (SST Chair), Jason Johnston (IB Coordinator), Leigh Mayerson (Guidance Counselor), Lina Zalewski (ESOL teacher) as well as specialists and French teachers. The Welcome Desk will continue at the Primary Campus. There will be no Welcome Desk at the Intermediate Campus at this time.

Iraq War Veteran Visits 3rd Grade Classes –

Captain Dallas Austin of the United States Army visited Ms. Majka's 3rd grade classroom in honor of Veterans Day last month. Captain Austin did a presentation about his life during the 15 months he served in Iraq as a helicopter pilot. He shared pictures of Iraqi children, schools, and wildlife. The children had many questions about his job and what it was like to be in the army. Captain Austin also presented the class with a framed U.S. flag that he flew in a mission over Iraq on January 18, 2009. The children thanked Captain Austin for his service to our country.

More International Recognition for Sarah Smith –

Word was received recently that Sarah Smith Elementary School was selected as the featured school on the Great Books Foundation website. Each month a school from around the world is featured in the section of the website called "Great Books Success Stories". The story features our school's implementation of Shared Inquiry through the Junior Great Books program. All classes K-5 are now implementing these methods. To learn more about how you, as a parent, can be aware of the Shared Inquiry method used by Great Books, please see the information about the Great Books Atlanta conference mentioned in this newsletter.

Counselor's Corner from Leigh Mayerson, Guidance Counselor –

There are many ways parents can encourage their children to get in the giving spirit and show them the true meaning of the holiday season. Here are five ways parents can teach your children the joy of caring:

1. Host a Coat, Toy, Book, or Food Party: For example, for a coat party have guests bring coats that are used but still in good condition. Maybe put younger kids to work cleaning out pockets, while other kids can decide which coats might need dry cleaning and which coats are ready to go.
2. Help Furry Friends: Your children can help out an animal shelter by collecting always-needed supplies such as cat litter, pet food, dog leashes, animal carriers, collars, etc.
3. Serve a Senior Citizen: The winter and holiday months are often the hardest on the elderly and so have your child consider reaching out to an elderly person. A little help will be much appreciated!
4. Feed the Needy: Have your children help out at a soup kitchen or food bank. If your child is not interested in food but wants to help the hungry: maybe he or she could help sort the donated goods or help with office tasks.
5. Give While Spending: For example, on a computer join iGive which is a free service that donates a portion of every purchase you make online to a charity of your choice. Or, have your children help you pick out holiday cards that benefit a charity such as the cards from Unicef.

Translation Provided –

If you need a copy of any document received at home in a language other than English, please call 404-802-7580. Translation/interpreter and other related services also are available upon request. You may also contact Ms. Lina Zalewski, Sarah Smith Elementary ESOL teacher, at (404) 802-3860 or email at: zalewskil@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Spanish

Si usted necesita una copia de este documento en un idioma otro que el inglés, por favor llame al número siguiente: 404-802-7580. Interpretaciones/traducción y otros servicios relacionados están disponibles bajo petición. También usted puede contactar Ms. Lina Zalewski, Sarah Smith Elementary ESOL teacher, at (404) 802-3860 or email at: zalewskil@atlanta.k12.ga.us.

Turkish:

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Chinese

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如有需要，可提供解释，翻译以及其它相关的服务。您也可以向 Ms. Lina Zalewski, ESOL Teacher at (404) 802-3860 or email at: zalewskil@atlanta.k12.ga.us.