

Amberly Elementary School Newsletter

PAWSOME EXPECTATIONS: *RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, SAFE, CARING*

Feb/March 2017

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Report Cards go Home- Feb. 6th
- ◆ Conferences- Feb. 14 & 16
- ◆ No School -Mid-Winter Break 2/24 & 2/27
- ◆ Placement Forms Due - March 1st
- ◆ 2017-18 Kindergarten Parent Mtg. 3/2 6:30 p.m.

Parent Input on 17-18 Class Placement

Most parents/guardians are very concerned that their child is placed with a caring and competent teacher. It is little wonder parents/guardians often feel strongly about having a voice in the selection of their child's class placement. However, there are many things that need to be considered in order to create successful classrooms. I would like to share the process the staff of Amberly follows when assigning class placement for the upcoming school year. Hopefully, this will provide you with a better understanding of how complex a balancing act this can be.

Parent/Guardian Input

Via the Parent/Guardian Placement Input Form, parents/guardians are invited to share in writing observations regarding their child's learning style and any educational needs that should be considered. ***Parent written requests for specific teachers will not be accepted. Passing conversations with teachers will also not be formally considered.*** A child's current teacher is open to hearing your concerns, however, the teacher cannot guarantee placement, particularly in an informal conversation.

Parent/Guardian Placement Input Forms will be available in the school office and on the Amberly Elementary School Website between February 13th and March 1st. All Parent/Guardian Placement Input Forms to be considered for the upcoming school year **are due to the school office on hard copy paper format by Wednesday, March 1st, 2017.** Email and/or faxed forms will not be accepted.

All grade level and resource teachers go through their list of current students and provide input on student academic performance, behavior, and special learning characteristics. Teachers identify if a student is academically strong, average or challenged by grade level curriculum. This identification is based on performance scores as well as general impressions. Teachers also identify students who may need special assistance, whether it is remediation or extension of the grade level curriculum. In addition to academic performance, teachers also make note of

student behavioral skills, identifying those who are strong leaders with peers, in need of peer support, or challenged by group interactions. Teachers also consider those children who may need to be separated from one another.

When the initial information gathering tasks have been completed, your child's current grade level teacher and resource teachers meet with the principal to draft the upcoming year's classes. The objective is to match student learning styles to teacher strengths and areas of talent, while creating classrooms that have a balanced number of students who are strong, self-directed learners, with those who need some support. It is important that students learn to work and socialize in environments of diversity. This not only prepares them for "the real world" but also allows individual talents to shine.

As staff work together in developing balanced classrooms, they factor in all student information gathered from the variety of sources. Creating balanced classrooms which focus on meeting all students' needs is our top priority!

Once new students have been registered and we know more regarding which students may not be returning, the class lists are reviewed again and may go through some adjustments. ***By the beginning of August, class placement is fairly finalized. Letters from the principal and upcoming year's teacher along with registration materials will be mailed by the second week of August to notify families of their child(ren)'s class placement.***

The Portage Public Schools and all public schools throughout the country have a legal and ethical requirement to provide students with balanced classrooms based on gender, race, ethnic & language groups, and academic achievement. I hope that by sharing this process, you will understand parent/guardian input is one of the many sources used to make informed decisions regarding class placement. Amberly Elementary School strives to create vibrant, excellent classrooms that serve the needs of all children.

Valentine Celebrations - February 10th!



Valentine's Day celebrations will take place on Friday, February 10th in the morning (half day of school) at a time the teacher deems least disruptive to the educational process. Please realize we strive to keep holiday celebrations low key and not longer than 45 minutes to ensure instruction and learning stay at the forefront of our school day. Teachers who choose to have students exchange Valentine Cards will send home a list of student names. All students in the class should be given an appropriate valentine. No special gifts or valentines are to be exchanged at school, as it creates a disruption to the learning environment. *In addition, due to our many food allergies, religious food preferences and parental food preferences for their child, NO CANDY OR SNACKS SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO VALENTINE CARDS.*

Parent - Teacher Conferences: February 14th & 16th

Initial parent/guardian sign up for Winter Conferences for Young Fives through Fourth Grade occurred during Open House. *If you have not yet signed up for conferences, please call the Amberly office ASAP at 323-5900* to sign up for a time to meet with your child's teacher.

Winter conferences will be held on:

Tuesday, February 14th: 4:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 16th: 4:30 – 8:00 p.m.



Two Household Families & Conferencing: Meeting Together with Separated or Divorced Parents

Living in a two-household family (shared custody) presents its own share of challenges and learning experiences for students (transporting items from one house to the other, informing both parents of events, etc.). Divorced parents who share legal custody of a child have a right to be kept informed of their child's progress and involved in their education, including conferencing with teachers.

To insure both parents hear the same information and to serve as positive role models of cooperation for their children, the staff of Amberly Elementary will conference with parents who share legal custody TOGETHER. Different conferences for the mother and father will not be held.

Only in extreme situations will separate conferences be held for two-household families. If you feel you have a situation that warrants separate conferences, please contact Mary Daoust, Principal.

Note: Joint legal custody is assumed unless the school is provided with a court order restricting legal custody of a parent(s).

**Half Day of School, Friday, February 10th;
No School on Friday & Monday February 24 & 27th -Mid Winter Break;
Half Day March 10th & 31st; Spring Break: April 3rd - April 7th!**

There are a number of non-student days coming up in the near future. *Please mark your calendar and plan for supervision of your child for the following dates:*

Friday, February 10th - Half Day of School, noon dismissal

Friday, February 24th & Monday, February 27th - NO SCHOOL - MID WINTER BREAK

Friday March 10 & 31st - Half Day of School - noon dismissal

Monday, April 3rd through Friday, April 7th - Spring Break

Monday, April 10th - School Resumes!

Report Cards Come Home Monday, Feb.6th!

Be sure to ask your child to see his/her report card when s/he comes home, Monday, February 6th. It will be very important that you review this report of progress prior to conferences on Feb. 14 & 16th. Although we send home report cards four times each school year, our students benefit from consistent communication between school and home. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher with questions you may have.



2017-18 Kindergarten Registration!!

Children who will be five on or before **September 1, 2017**, are eligible for kindergarten during the 2017-18 school year. We would appreciate your assistance in estimating the number of kindergarten students who will attend Amberly next school year. **If you have a child who will be eligible to enroll in kindergarten during the 2017-2018 school year, please contact our school office at 323-5900 to register him/her.** Current Young Five students need not register. If you have a neighbor who has a child who will be five prior to **September 1, 2017**, please encourage them to contact the Amberly office.

On March 2, 2017, from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. a School Readiness Parent Orientation will be held for parents/guardians of students eligible for enrollment in kindergarten during the 2017-18 school year. Further information regarding this meeting will be sent to parents/guardians who have contacted the Amberly Elementary Office and registered their child.

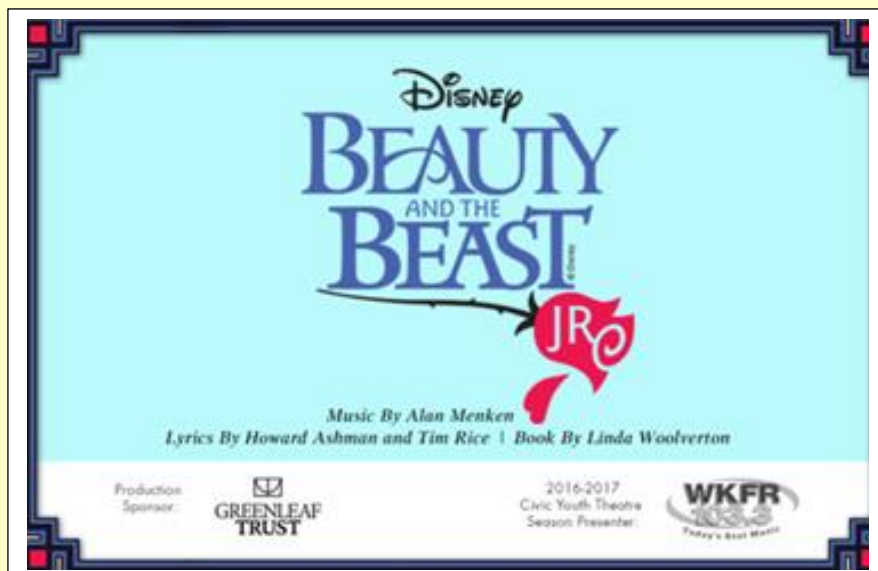
Washington's Presentations: Friday, Feb. 17th!

On Friday, February 17th, Von and Fran Washington will be presenting to our students. *Grades Y5-2 will be viewing African American Folktales; Grades 3-5 will be viewing The Untold Story.* *The Untold Story* is a story about a young girl named Reba who does not want to go to school because her friends make fun of her because she likes to study. Reba learns the secret for changing the behavior of her tormenting friends lies in the very work she is trying to avoid. African American Folktales features stories of the old South, the city, the farm, and Africa. The stories have been selected with family values in mind and include "The Whole Life Adventures of Sanko and Kiki," two children growing up in America. The stories are spirited, informative, and insightful. Each story takes the audience on an action-packed journey full of surprises. . We are sure our students will enjoy and learn from the wonderful presentations of the Washington's, as they have from past performances

An Amberly Afternoon At the Theatre Saturday March 25, 2017, 4pm Kalamazoo Civic Theatre - \$7 per person

Bring the family downtown for an incredible opportunity to enjoy the Kalamazoo Civic Youth Theatre's performance of "Beauty and the Beast Jr." for less than the cost of going to the movies. It is a great opportunity to enjoy a live performance featuring young local talent. And with dozens of restaurants ranging from casual to fine dining in the downtown area, make an evening of it! We had an awesome time in past years with our group of 80 + Amberly students and families attend "The Hobbit" and "Stuart Little". Let's make this year even better! We are so fortunate to live in a community with such incredible resources.

Simply complete the order form sent home in Friday Folders or obtain another one from the Amberly Office. Return the form with your check made out to "Amberly PTA" **by Monday, February 6, 2017.** Tickets will be sent home with your student by the end of February. Please contact Carie Gross (carieann @hotmail.com or 383-1648) with any questions.



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Thank You for Box Tops - Keep them Coming!!

We have had great participation in Box Tops for Education this year at Amberly! Thank you to all families sending in their box tops. *A special "thank you" to all our volunteers who organize this program!* Funds received from this program go to purchase needed supplies and equipment for students and staff. *Please continue to support this program!* Box tops for Education can be found on General Mills, Betty Crocker, Hamburger Helper and many other boxed food products. *Simply send in your saved box tops to school with your students! This is an easy way to support our school!*



Join Amberly Elementary School On Facebook

The Amberly Elementary Facebook Page is a closed group that serves as a home-school communication device. The purpose is to keep parents/guardians informed of school activities, events and needs. On this page we post pictures of students participating in events & activities at school (students are not identified), needs of classes, volunteer opportunities and upcoming school events.

This is a CLOSED GROUP. To join the Amberly Elementary Group on Facebook, search "Amberly Elementary" or go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/470317339674820/> on your Facebook account and then request to join the group. This is one more way to keep informed of opportunities, to see your child involved in school activities, assist our school and keep up to date on events occurring at Amberly.



Do we have current email and phone numbers???

With our new student information system, electronic communication from teachers, the schools and the district will be utilized to a greater extent. This makes it EXTREMELY important that we have CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESSES on file for student parents/guardians. And as always, it is important that *contact phone numbers for families and emergency contacts be kept current.* Families may update this information electronically via the new Skyward Student Information System. Please visit the following site for further information regarding how to access Skyward: <http://www.portageps.org/skyward/default.aspx> IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO PROVIDE OUR OFFICES WITH A CURRENT EMAIL & EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY AND TO STAY CURRENT ON SCHOOL EVENTS.

Please call the Amberly Office at 323-5900 with any changes in family or emergency contact information!

Dear Amberly Families:

It is with heartfelt words that I inform you of my plan to retire at the end of this school year. After thirty-five years in public education, it is time to embark on a new phase of my life spending time with family, friends and enjoying free time to catch up on my personal “to do list”.

Amberly Elementary has been my second home; I have considered the children “my children” and the parents/guardians part of my Amberly Family for the past 15 years. As principal I have had the opportunity to be a part of an outstanding administrative team and work with a highly effective & distinguished teaching and support staff that continuously put children first. The support of parents/guardians and the community in Portage is second to none. This is a community of caring that I am so proud to have been a small part of.

While still principal, I will continue to work to support students, staff and the families as we transition to a new principal. The district plans to name my successor by the end of April and to have parents/guardians meet and provide input on finalists for the Amberly principal position. I will make you aware of the dates/times of these meetings.

The Amberly School Community will always be in my heart. I am proud of our accomplishments, and have many fond memories of the students and families. I value each interaction I have had with you and your children. Your presence has enriched my life and my Amberly Family will always be a part of me. Thank you for allowing me to have served as your principal.

Sincerely,

Mary V. Daoust