

January 20, 2010

Dear Nixon Parents,

Tragedy in Haiti

The tragedy in Haiti has had many Nixon students, parents, and staff asking me what we can do to help. This enormous event of worldwide magnitude also touches as close to home. Students heard briefly about the situation in Haiti from **Mr. Manuel at school meeting** last week, whose extended family lives in Haiti. Mr. Manuel shared a little about the country prior to the earthquake as well as their current needs. A few students also introduced a **student-initiated project** that we will begin today, Help for Haiti. We decided on this initiative after consulting with Student Council, the PTO, and the School Advisory Committee (SAC). **Large water bottles** are located in the entranceway, in the rotunda, and in the cafeteria. Student Council members suggested that children might bring in **coins/cash** from their allowance, for doing a special chore at home, give their snack money for one day, or look in their piggy banks. Students had already raised over \$1800 as of Friday! This initiative will run through February 5.

Nixon's **children** (via Student Council) will **decide on which charities** the money should go to (parents/staff will assist in developing a list from which children will choose). We expect our coin donation may be followed up by the sale of some items (the children suggest school supplies). At that point we may need parents to supervise student sales. We may seek a more concrete project in which students send items to a specific group/school once needs are more clear (e.g. clothes or supplies for children).

We are considering ways for students to learn more about this part of our world and how the Haitian people's lives have been/are the same and different from their own. Our goal is to keep this initiative student-generated, simple, educational, and empowering for children.

A few parents have already stepped up to assist. If you are interested in helping, please contact **Mrs. Hochberg or Mrs. Requadt** (and thank you to them both for stepping up so quickly!).



Bullying Survey

Parents of 2nd to 5th graders may have heard from your children that they took an **online survey** about bullying. This is part of a districtwide initiative designed to further our

understanding of bullying in Sudbury and help us take next steps. The questions focused on **what children feel adults’ responses should be** to a wide range of behaviors, **how welcome and included** students feel, and **what aspects of the school make them feel welcome** or unwelcome. As you know, **Nixon saw a drop** in student reports of bullying in third and fourth grade last year, however the **reports of bullying are too high**. As a member of the Anti Bullying committee, I look forward to seeing the data, and I’ll keep you informed.



Nixon Parents Pleased with Academic Balance

The School Advisory Council , composed of equal numbers of parents and staff, has spent a number of meetings analyzing the data from last June’s parent survey. While we are making progress in a number of areas, we were particularly pleased with this result: The **vast majority** of parents feel that Nixon strikes **just the right balance between Core Academics and Enrichment Activities** (up about 20% to almost 90%). Be looking for a joint PTO/SAC survey soon in which we will ask for more information and follow up on some areas we hope you see as improved!

MCAS Dates

Following is our **tentative grade specific MCAS** schedule for this spring. Please keep in mind that this could be modified if we have an unexpected snow day or other unexpected situation. If you know your child will be absent for an unavoidable reason on a scheduled day, please contact me directly to talk through how we will manage this. Note that the state has **reduced the number of sessions** that children will take in English/Language Arts from three to two (excluding the Long Composition for 4th grade).

| <u>3rd grade</u> | | <u>4th Grade</u> | | <u>5th Grade</u> | |
|------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 3/22 | ELA #1 | 3/23 | Long Composition | 3/31 | ELA #1 |
| 3/25 | ELA #2 | 3/29 | ELA #1 | 4/1 | ELA #2 |
| 5/10 | Math # 1 | 3/30 | ELA #2 | 5/13 | Math #1 |
| 5/11 | Math # 2 | 5/17 | Math #1 | 5/14 | Math #2 |
| | | 5/18 | Math #2 | 5/19 | Sci/Tech #1 |
| | | | | 5/20 | Sci/Tech #2 |



Valentine's Day Parties

At Nixon, different grade levels celebrate Valentine's Day in different ways. Your child's **teacher will sent home specific information.** In support of our school rule "Be Respectful and Kind," in classes where Valentine cards are an option, **students who choose to them must bring them for every child** in the class. **Please, no candy in accordance with our Nutrition and Allergy policies and guidelines.** When a few parents succumb, it puts teachers in a very difficult position. If a child comes with candy or treats in cards or otherwise, I am asking teachers to call me down to remove it. Please avoid disappointment all around. If you feel you must add something in the card, a sticker or eraser would be acceptable.

Parking at St. Elizabeth's

As you know, St. Elizabeth's has generously allowed Nixon's parents to park in their lot to receive children who are walked across the street by Roy, our crossing guard. This allows parents to avoid the traffic back-up getting out of Nixon's lot. However, in a recent conversation with a parishioner speaking on behalf of the church, I want to communicate to you that some concerns have arisen about **student safety.** Please be extra vigilant about **meeting your children and not having them cross the parking lot on their own.** Students have reportedly darted out, and parishioners are concerned. Please also move very slowly and **watch for children as you pull out and drive.** When the **snow banks pile up, please park in one of the other lots rather than parking parallel to Concord Road** in the front lot, as the passage for cars becomes too small. Finally, we have learned that on a couple of occasions a **child's parent has not been present when the child arrived.** Luckily, others pitched in to wait until the child's parent arrived, however, we are very concerned about this and will be considering options. For the time being, if you believe you will be **even a minute late, please call the office** so we can make arrangements for your child. Thank you all for your continued efforts to keep Nixon's children safe.

Mini projects around the school

Would you like to help out in a very modest way on your own time schedule? Here are a few jobs that would help us out at Nixon: **Copy materials** for teachers once a week, put up and take down **bulletin boards** or **keep one little nook tidy** (e.g. straighten the front shelf with hand sanitizer or **the computer lab** work area periodically--or identify a little spot that you think could use a little TLC). Email me at joni_jay@sudbury.k12.ma.us.

Needed: Yards of burlap, flannel or other fabric that could be used to cover bulletin boards (so we don't have to keep putting up and taking down paper). Ideally flame retardant, though not required. Also: a package of **clothes pins to help organize the Lost and Found** (and someone to hang up gloves and hats and such so children can more easily find them).

Redistricting

As you know, the School Committee plans to vote on the Redistricting plan this coming Wednesday. Dr. Bracket is preparing a **Q & A section** on the district website to answer frequently asked questions that you may have. Should the redistricting pass, Nixon is slated to send some students to Haynes and receive some students from Noyes, with a net of about **20 students fewer than we have this year (across all grades K-5)**. This 20 student difference was deliberately planned in because Nixon has the highest number of homes on the market and potential for home development. I want to assure all families that should redistricting occur, we will work collaboratively with parents to **plan for the best possible transition** for families.

Class Sizes and Sections

I would like to clarify that the **number of class sections and class sizes projected for Nixon for next year are NOT driven by redistricting**. Rather, they are based on our expected **enrollment and budget** considerations. For example, while we have loved our four first grade classes of 16-17 students, most likely this group would be placed into three classes of 21-22, comparable with the other schools. (The one exception might be 5th grade, as we do not yet know how many families will request their child remain at their 2009-10 school rather than redistrict.) Nixon's kindergarten enrollment is still unclear as we have **14 families with children of kindergarten age from whom we have not heard whether their child will attend kindergarten at Nixon**. If you know such a family, please urge them to communicate their intents, as this will assist our planning. I can tell you that the budget will continue to be a significant challenge for the next school year, and class sections and sizes could be impacted.

Nixon's project enrollment and number of sections from superintendent's redistricting report (same number of sections whether or not we redistrict).

| | pK | HDK | FDK | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Pre K-5 | TTL FTE | Gr K-5 |
|------------------|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|--------|
| NIXON | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Act Enroll 09-10 | | 18 | 37 | 66 | 88 | 92 | 68 | 96 | 465 | | 465 |
| Sects 09-10 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 22 | 21.5 | 22 |
| Cls Size 09-10 | | 18.0 | 18.5 | 16.5 | 22.0 | 23.0 | 22.7 | 24.0 | 21.1 | | 21.1 |
| Pro Enroll 10-11 | | 12 | 40 | 65 | 63 | 86 | 82 | 69 | 417 | | 417 |
| Sects 10-11 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 20 | 19.5 | 20 |
| Cls Size 10-11 | | 12.0 | 20.0 | 21.7 | 21.0 | 21.5 | 20.5 | 23.0 | 20.9 | | 20.9 |

Happenings at Nixon

Don't miss the PTO sponsored **Family Movie Night on Friday, January 29 at 6:30**. See this week's flier for details.

It is a joy to spend time with your children every day! Warmly,

Joni Jay