



DMS Newsflash

February 2021

Dear Parents & Guardians,

Second Step/Social Emotional Update

As we move toward the second half of the school year, we will continue to put an emphasis on social emotional learning for our students. While social emotional learning is always important, COVID 19 has created some unique challenges for many students and we want to ensure that all of our students develop problem-solving skills, gain empathy for others, and develop resiliency to face various situations. With this year being the first year of K-5 program implementation, we are encouraged by the topics that are covered and meaningful discussions that are taking place in our classrooms.

In the second half of the year, Second Step will focus on emotional management and developing problem solving-skills.

Sample lesson topics in these areas include:

Emotional Management

- K & 1:** identifying feelings, self talk, calming down strategies, managing anger, learning calming down strategies
- 2 & 3:** managing emotions, handling mistakes, managing anger and anxious feelings, learning how to handle disappointment
- 4 & 5:** learning calming down strategies, managing strong feelings, managing frustrations, resisting revenge

Problem Solving

- K & 1:** fair play, handling having things taken away, fair ways to play, inviting others to join in
- 2 & 3:** taking responsibility for your actions, playing on a playground, dealing with negative peer pressure
- 4 & 5:** taking responsibility, making a plan, handling peer pressure, dealing with gossip, seeking help

*Please note that the Second Step Program is different for each grade; grade levels were paired based on similarity of sample topics listed.

In addition to Second Step, students in Grades 4 and 5 will participate in an Internet Safety Presentation presented by Stonington Youth Officer Browning in the near future and our 5th grade students will continue to participate in the VOICE Program.

Social Emotional Development is very important for every student! We aspire to help ALL students develop strong social emotional skills that will help lead them to success and happiness. If you are looking for additional information about how to best meet your child's social emotional needs at home, please contact a member of our mental health team. *(see top of next page)*

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Mental Health Team Contacts include:

Alexis Moniz, **School Psychologist**
alexis.moniz@stoningtonschools.org

Nora Selinger, **School Counselor**
nora.selinger@stoningtonschools.org

Kara Robenhymer, **School Psychologist**
kara.robehymer@stoningtonschools.org

Sincerely,
Jenn & Tom



SPS Equity Update

Stonington Public Schools Equity Update

Stonington Public Schools recognizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our journey toward creating an anti-racist and anti-biased school system. With the approach of Black History Month in February, the district wants to acknowledge that Black History is part of American History, and although there may be supplemental educational events and or lessons during the month of February, the district is committed to the integration of Black History and culture into the core curriculum throughout the year. The district's approach aligns with the guidance provided in the *Do's and Don't of Teaching Black History* written by the Teaching Tolerance organization.

Identity, stereotypes, equity and racism are topics that are addressed in grades K-8 on an ongoing basis through the Second Step curriculum and in the K-5, 9-12 VOICE Program, which will begin in the middle grades in March. In February supplemental lessons using Scholastic News or a variety of children's literature may take place in celebration of the month. However, this does not replace the continuing work in securing books and other classroom resources that are reflective of our entire student population. The Stonington Middle School Family Anti-racism Circle commenced meeting in January and will continue to meet through April, exploring a range of books specific to racism. At both the Stonington Middle and High Schools, noteworthy, but often overlooked contributions and experiences of citizens of color will be highlighted.

To get a fuller understanding of our district's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, please visit the district's DEI webpage and read the Equity Plan Implementation Guide.



DIVERSITY
EQUITY
INCLUSION

Important Dates

February

- 4 Board of Education Budget Workshop • District Office • 7 PM
- 5 Picture Retake Day for Cohort B & Distance Learners
- 11 Board of Education Meeting • District Office • 7 PM
- 15-16 Presidents' Day Observance • No School
- 22 Picture Retake Day for Cohort A & Distance Learners
- 23 Sports Day • Wear clothing or a jersey from your favorite sports team



March

- 1-5 Read Across America/ DMS Reading Week
- 9 PTO Meeting • 6:30 PM
- 11 Board of Education Meeting • District Office • 7 PM
- 12 Professional Development • No School for students
- 19 Report Cards Issued • Cohort B
- 22 Report Cards Issued • Cohort A
- 22 Down Syndrome Awareness Day

Nurse's Notes

Healthy DMS Community

Our goal is to keep DMS healthy and in school! We are asking that you continue to follow the [Parent/Family Responsibility Form - Health Safety Requirements](#) which includes the [Connecticut Travel Advisory](#).

*****Notify the school nurse with the date of your return to Connecticut and if you plan on testing or are planning to quarantine. *****

Families, students and staff are doing a fantastic job adhering to the guidelines, and it is working! The incidence of spread within the DMS school community has been minimal. Keep up the good work!

COVID-19 can spread anywhere, even places you feel safe, like your home. If one person in your household gets COVID-19, s/he can spread it, even if s/he doesn't have symptoms.

If someone you live who tests positive for [#COVID19](#):

- Separate the person from others, if possible.
- Wear a mask when caring for that person.
- Wash your hands often.
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.

Learn what more you can do to keep COVID-19 outside your home, and if it gets in, how to stop the spread: <https://bit.ly/3qgSwdp>.



Hearing and Vision Screening for distance learners

If your child is a distance learner and you would like your child screened for hearing and vision, please contact the school nurse.

Hearing and vision greatly affects your child's ability to learn. Please follow up as soon as possible with any referrals and notify the nurse of appointment dates and outcomes of the visit. Submit the completed referral to the nurse as soon as possible so that we can best help your child at school.

COVID Vaccine

Please help us spread the word to those who are eligible to receive the [COVID-19 Vaccine](#). Currently if you are 75 years or older you are eligible to receive the vaccine. You are able to sign up through the link provided on the Ledge Light Health District. Additional scheduling resources: COVID-19 vaccination appointments by phone:

Those unable to schedule an appointment online may call the COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments Assistance Line, 877-918-2224, Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Due to high volume, hold times may vary.

More information can be found here: [COVID-19 Vaccine Access for those 75 and Older](#).

Trust Science!

Nurse Lori did! I wanted to do my part in protecting myself, my loved ones, and **you**-my DMS Community!!!

Keep doing your part and continue to keep the DMS community **healthy!** We are in this together!



Nurse Lori
DMSnurse@stoningtonschools.org

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Specials Update

Our goal for the year is to keep families informed about grade level curriculum in Art, Library, 5th Grade Band, Music, and Physical Education, and how they can support their children at home.

Art

Miss Biernacki



We're very excited to be starting a new specials cycle! A new cycle means new, fun projects. We will continue working on the elements of art: line, color, shape, form, texture, value, and space, and we will continue to make connections between our art work and the world around us. Here are skills each grade level will work on:

- **K** - Identify shapes and lines, use shapes and lines in an artwork, build skills in various media through experimentation.
- **1** - Identify different textures, create the appearance of texture with painted paper, use line and shape to create patterns, learn about art from different places, cultures, and times.
- **2** - Experiment with color schemes, identify textures, create textured surfaces in model magic, incorporate art vocabulary when describing artistic choices.
- **3** - Identify commonalities in cultural art traditions, use cross-curricular content to inspire works of art, use form to make 3D art, experiment with color mixing.
- **4** - Use value to create the illusion of space/form on a flat surface, use weaving techniques to create patterns, interpret art using contextual information, subject matter, characteristics of form, and media.
- **5** - Create sculptures by making forms out of wire, write artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices, develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings, introduction to one point perspective.

Music

Mrs. McMinn



We are excited to begin our 2nd rotation of each special this month! In the second five-week cycle for music, students will work on the elements of music including pitch and timbre. We will practice these using our "listening ears," reading notation, playing instruments, and movement. Here are skills each grade level will work on:

- **K** - Identify high/low, up/down, fast/slow, loud/quiet with "Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saens.
- **1** - Identify instruments and their sounds with "Peter and the Wolf" by Sergei Prokofiev. Read and perform pitches so-mi.
- **2** - Identify instruments and instrument families and their sounds with "Peter and the Wolf" by Sergei Prokofiev.
 - Read and perform pitches do-re-mi-so-la.
- **3** - Identify instruments, their families, and how sound is produced.
 - Read and perform pitches do-re-mi-so-la-do.
- **4** - Identify instruments, their families, and how sound is produced.
 - Read and perform pitches on the treble clef staff.
- **5** - Identify world instruments, their classifications and how sound is produced.
 - Read and perform pitches on the treble clef staff.

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Library

Mrs. Anderson-Halbert

With the new rotation of specials, comes new topics in library! We are very excited to share some more diverse authors with students and develop our research skills!

- **K**- Illustrator study on Jaime Kim, focusing on social emotional connections
 - Author/Illustrator study on Vanessa Brantley Newton, focusing on making connections between books and real life
 - Author/Illustrator student on Mo Willems, focusing on continuing the story and parts of a book.
- **1** - Author/Illustrator study on Grace Lin, focusing on diverse cultures and traditions
 - Author/Illustrator study on Christian Robinson, focusing on social emotional skills
 - Author/Illustrator study on Jan Brett, focusing on the power of literature to teach us and take us to new places
- **2** - Author/Illustrator study on Patricia Pollaco, focusing on story elements and character development; Author/Illustrator study on Peter Reynolds, focusing on social emotional skills
 - Author/Illustrator study on Frank Morrison, focusing on diverse cultures and experiences, and biography features.
- **3** - Author/Illustrator study on Vanessa Brantley-Newton, focusing on diverse abilities and experiences; plagiarism, copyright, and the research process, culminating in a research project about penguins.
- **4** - Building on their research skills from third grade, students will focus on finding reliable sources and citations while doing research projects focusing on states.
- **5** - Continuing their research skills, students will learn more about credible sources and independent research on aspects of the solar system.

Physical Education

Mrs. LaPalme

With the new rotation comes a whole new variety of activities in PE! Students will be working through fitness tests as well as balance and coordination through games, fitness, and yoga movements.

- **K**- Identify balance within general and physical space through creating body shapes in yoga.
- **1** - Identify more complicated balance postures to lead to coordination development.
- **2** - Create physical flows of movement throughout yoga poses and movement around the gym.
- **3** - Complete the fitness tests in muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance
- **4** - Complete the fitness tests in muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance
- **5** - Complete the fitness tests in muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance



WINTER BOOTS FOR STONINGTON YOUTH

A local effort to expand upon the work of TVCCA/RSVP's Santa Anonymous Boot Program.

Stonington Human Services is currently collecting names of school-age children in need of a new pair of warm, winter boots.

To sign a child up for the program OR to sponsor a child in need, please email:
LTheodore@stonington-ct.gov



Winter 2021



Youth & Family Services

GIFTS FROM THE HEART

The best gifts are made with LOVE!



In this *Take & Make* series, families work together (from home) to create several unique handmade gifts for someone special this Valentine's Day. Each gift making kit includes all materials to make (5) gifts/cards - (includes gift wrap).

Kits will be available for pick up at Human Services starting February 1st; pick up times TBD.

Take & Make Gifts:

Sock Sundae Bowl, Chocolate Spoons, Heart String Art, Valentine's Tic-Tac-Toe, LOVE Handprint Canvas
Open to ALL ages; may need assistance from a parent/guardian. Fee: \$25 (includes materials and instructions to craft all FIVE gifts!)

CHILDREN'S Take Home Book of the Month Club

book · of · the · month

This program is packed with fun and engaging activities! Each age-appropriate kit contains the book of the month along with science activities, recipes, games, puzzles and crafts all designed to be creative learning extensions of the book.

Open to children Pre-K-Grade 3. Kits available for pick up (by appointment) at Human Services..
Fee: \$15/kit.

March

Jamie O'Rourke and
the Big Potato
By: Tomie dePaola

April

Cloudy With a Chance of
Meatballs
By: Judi Barrett



AVAILABLE FOR STONINGTON RESIDENTS!

FREE

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED AT STONINGTON.RECDESK.COM

Come try a centuries old winter tradition and build memories that will last a lifetime! Stonington residents are invited to join us at The Washington Trust Community Skating Center, located in downtown Westerly. Rental skates are available at the rink for \$4, if needed.



Little learners (ages 3-5) are invited to join Head Teacher, Miss Jenni, for a uniquely-crafted, at home virtual learning experience! As peer to peer socialization is a major component of preschool, safe, socially-distanced outdoor components will also be included with the program (weather permitting).

5-DAY/WEEK PROGRAM FEE INCLUDES:

Weekly, virtual personalized check-in with student and parent/caregiver to set goals and tailor specific activities to meet them + Seesaw app for daily Circle Time + Daily kindergarten worksheets to support learning + Access 1:1 teacher support + Videos of activities, crafts and experiments to complete at home + Full supply kit + Friday socialization at Spellman Park.



With help comes hope...

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS



INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY COUNSELING FOR RESIDENTS - 860-531-5015

Draft: Deans Mill School PTO Meeting Minutes

Date: January 12, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by PTO President, Katie Quinlan at 6:33 P.M.

2. In Attendance

Principal- Jenn McCurdy, Vice Principal- Tom Bousquet, PTO President- Katie Quinlan, PTO Vice President- Jenni Adkins, PTO Treasurer- Tracy Brunelle, PTO Secretary- Jen Flynn, Brittany Bocian, Karen Balestracci, Merin Troutman, Stephanie Gagnon, Ashley Tewell, Elyse Hicks, Kristin Cimini, Erin Janicek & Pam Choquette.

3. Secretary's Report Approval

Reviewed PTO Minutes from 11/9/20. Motion to approve by Jenni Adkins. Second by Merin Troutman. All in favor unanimous.

4. Treasurer Report Approval

Beginning balance of \$48,000. Register balance \$47,000. Waiting on Book Fair transactions. Only expenses at this time would be classroom expenses. Motion to approve by Jenni Adkins, Second by Erin Janicek. All in favor unanimous.

5. New Business

Principal's Report, Jenn McCurdy provided this update.

-Low COVID incidences at DMS and hopeful this will continue.

-BOE will re-visit idea of returning to school, with more in person days, at a later date.

-Attendance Rates continue to be high at this time.

-In regard to this years budget, parents are encouraged to participate in the process.

-There are a lot of unknowns for the fall at this point. Will depend on vaccination process & masks/social distancing will remain in place.

-Next BOE Meeting will be live streamed. Parents are encouraged to voice their opinion & be involved.

-Overview of budget will be provided. Weekly Board meetings to follow on Thursdays, for the month of January. Sessions will be recorded and can also be accessed through the website.

-Reach out to Jenn & Tom if there are any questions.

-Looking to expand summer school options (more time/more students).

-Parent Square is in the process of being implemented. Parents please download app., as this will be used as a main form of communication between school & parents.

Tom Bousquet provided the following update:

-District Equity Work: Professional Development being done at the district level. Looking at curriculum/programming to ensure compassion and respect is being promoted within the building. Ongoing for this year & future years.

Outdoor Classroom Update: Community is in process of making a presentation for the BOE, to provide our plan. Will raise funds to help with adding more items to the classroom. (plants, etc.)

5th Grade End of Year "Party": Looking to plan something for this end of year activity. Will look into what is allowed, and will form a committee to explore options.

6. Upcoming Chair Committee Updates

Liaisons: Ashely Tewell. "Thank You" gifts went well around the holidays. Liaison program will continue to be utilized to support the school when needed.

Annual Appeal: PTO Treasurer will be needed for the next school year. Please reach out to Tracy Brunelle if interested. \$1,600 for Annual Appeal has come in thus far. Also please reach out if you would like to make a donation. Donation letters were not mailed out this year, due to unprecedented times.

Teacher Appreciation: Jenni Adkins. Will explore options to celebrate our teachers that is safe & budget friendly.

Cultural Enrichment: Merin Troutman. Explored virtual events, but not cost friendly at this current time. Will continue to research ideas.

7. Old Business

Giving Tree: Great success as all item requests were fulfilled for local families in need. Hoping to do next year as well.

Science & Tech. Day: Looking to be held again virtually this year. Most likely for a date in May. Was very successful last year.

Field Day: Will not be a traditional field day. Will look to plan something for June that involves students participating in activities within their cohorts. Committee will be formed to help organize this event.

Meeting was adjourned by PTO President, Katie Quinlan, at 7:20 p.m.
Minutes were transcribed by PTO Secretary, Jen Flynn

