



December 13, 2016

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Link Letter

Principally Speaking

"This Is the Best Day Ever!"

When snow first started hitting recently, one of the students on the way in to school exclaimed, "This is the best day ever!" This is a time of transformation. We often think of this time in negative terms: struggles finding and putting on winter gear, slipping and sliding in the car and on foot, "It's so cold...", and so forth. We have the opportunity to turn that around and see things through the eyes of a child. We can join them in their exquisite journey and exploration of all the things around us. TED Talk: What Adults Can Learn From Kids -- http://www.ted.com/talks/adora_svitak

Growing and Searching

As a growth organization, we develop our voice, we uncover our gifts, we look for ways to live further into who we are meant to be. Sometimes that growth leads to a new opportunity, as has happened for one of our fine staff members. Mrs. Haslacker (Discovery E) has accepted the opportunity to be a dean of students at another school in the area starting in January 2017. We congratulate her and wish her well on this new adventure! She will always be a part of our GRCDC family.

That leaves us with the need to conduct a search to find a new member of the team. It takes a careful search, and time, to find the best match we possibly can. The process includes a certain amount of time making sure that the position is posted and has as much of a reach as we can to find quality candidates. Then there are important steps in screening to ascertain best fit. So to help us with the time needed to have a rich process, we will have a long term substitute teacher in place, and we will wrap our arms around the Discovery in support. We have every hope and intention of finding a quality match by the end of January, and sooner if possible. The main factor will be finding quality candidates.

That is where you can help. Please spread the word about this opportunity: grcdc.org/about/employment-opportunities/. The more we spread the word, the better chance we have of finding our next community member. Thank you!

Severe Weather Awareness Poster and Video contests

Fourth and fifth graders, check out the Severe Weather Awareness poster contest. Older siblings may qualify for the video contest. See the link below for more details. <http://www.mcswa.com/poster-contest>

Correction

I have to make a correction to my article from last week on Attendance: When we have less than 75% of students in attendance on a school day, we go straight to losing a percentage of our funding. We do not have an option to make those days up.

Here's a revision to that section of the article:

"Hopefully what I've said above helps illustrate the loss to your child, but there are other costs as well:

- When one of our community is not here, some of the connection building is missed. There is an emptiness, a void in the community. This takes energy and resources from the gathering. (Source: Community, Peter Block.)
- If we do not have at least 75% attendance on a particular day, we have to pay back the state part of our funding for that day."

That's it for this week. As always, I invite you to Be Kind, Keep Discovering, and have a great week!

John Robinson, Principal/Executive Director/Superintendent
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Coach

Family Team Corner

It's getting colder, and many of our students don't have suitable winter apparel. Please look for the Winter Gear Tree on the Family Team board (next to the Resource Room). This is a great way to give within our school community, if you are able!

Reminder that our December Family Team meeting is tomorrow night. We look forward to seeing you there! As always, children are welcome, and we encourage everybody to attend at least one Family Team meeting per year.

Central Office Updates

- **Open Enrollment for the 2017-2018** school year began December 1, 2016. By law in Michigan, charter school families must indicate their intent to re-enroll for the coming school year. **NEW this year**, each family will be receiving a personalized "Intent to Enroll" application in the mail. You must return this document to the school by February 24, 2017 in order to have a spot on the class roster next year. If you do not return this document, your student may lose his or her spot at GRCDC. These were mailed out this week, so keep your eye on your mailbox at home!
- **School Closings:** In the case of inclement weather, we will make a decision to close school as early as possible. We will send an email blast out to our E-Link list and inform the news agencies (television and radio) if we decide to close. **Look or listen** for our school's name 'Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center' or 'GR Child Discovery Center'. We will also **change the voice mail** to indicate that school is closed for the day. If you have any questions about this policy, please let us know. If you are not receiving email notices, please send an email to Rachel at harthrac@childdiscoverycenter.org to be added to the E-Link list.
- If your student is participating in **Math Club**, this week is the last week of club.
- As we head into **cold and flu season**, it's time for a reminder about when to keep your child home from school. If your child had a fever (100 degrees or higher) or has vomited in the last 24 hours, you must keep him/her home from school. In addition, your child must be fever free without the aide of fever reducing medicines (Tylenol, Ibuprofen).

Calendar

The calendar also available at grcdc.org

12/13	Math Club until 4:30 PM (4th grade) Family Team Meeting, 6:30—8:00 PM
12/14	Early Release Day, Dismissal at 1:10 PM Math Club until 2:30 PM (5th grade)
12/15	Math Club until 4:30 (5th grade) ** LAST DAY ** Odyssey of the Mind practice until 5:00 PM
12/16	Afternoon Meeting, 3:00 PM
12/19	Girl Scouts, 6:00 PM
12/23—1/2	NO SCHOOL, Winter Break The last day the school is in session before Winter Break is Thursday, December 22nd. There will be no school starting Friday, December 23 through Monday, January 2nd. The first day back in session will be Tuesday, January 3rd.
1/6	First Friday Food

Please arrange for your child to **arrive at school between 7:45—8:00 am**. Please sign your child in at the office if arrival is after 8:05 am.

Dismissal is 3:15 pm M, T, Th, F and 1:10 pm on Wednesdays

The Philosophy by Sarah Cooper

Think back to when you were in school. How much homework did you have? How did homework impact your learning? For many children and their parents, homework elicits strong emotions and great time challenges. Yet for other parents, they ask for homework, print off worksheets or buy workbooks so children will be engaged in learning.

As a staff, we are challenging the homework norms many of us grew up with and question the “no homework,” campaigns that are popular on social media. To help ground our thinking and decision making, our entire staff read a variety of research articles and applied knowledge of our GRCDC families to construct developmentally appropriate homework recommendations for K-1, 2-3 and 4-5. Our intention was to be mindful of relationships, research and the impact on students in poverty.

Based on a collaborative review of research, teams of staff members summarized their learning and connected it to research or our professional knowledge.

Discovery A and B recommends:

- Homework can summarize or clarify learning and be shared with families (Epstein, 2001).
- Homework based on repetition is limited to the 10 minutes per grade level (Cooper, 2006).
- Reading would be expected during the weekdays (Discovery A and B)
- Homework can be differentiated and resources provided so all are successful

Discovery C and D recommends:

- Homework will be meaningful and relevant; not busy work (Marzano, 2013).
- Homework should not involve materials that families must provide; materials could be sent home to support all families
- Policy should address purpose, time and choice (Discovery C and D staff)

Discovery E and F recommends:

- Homework is limited to the 10 minutes per grade level rule (Cooper, 2006).
- No homework unless it is something that can only be done at home (Marzano, 2013).
- Homework can be detrimental to children in poverty because support (time, resources, etc.) is not always available to help complete work and projects (Kralvolec and Bell, 2001).
- Effective communication with parents about homework is critical to ensuring students return the work (Discovery F staff)
- Games can be suggested to parents to help reinforce skills (Discovery E and F staff)

These are recommendations that will require some further refinement into formal policies. All policies be shared with all families in early January 2017 and added to our Family Handbook. From conversation and research, staff all agrees that homework should be meaningful. Marzano’s (2013) findings that homework offers only a 6% increase in achievement for grades 4-6 indicates a lot of time and energy spent on homework does not have as big an impact as many believe. I encourage you to consider how our findings may inform your thinking about homework. If you have questions or would like to provide feedback, please contact me! I’d love to share more of our work. Additional articles about homework that have informed our thinking include: [What research says about the value of homework: Research review](#) and [Rethinking Homework](#).

Thank you!

Sarah Cooper, Pedagogista coopesar@grcdc.org

Grand Rapids Nutrition Center

The full menu is available on our website:
<http://grcdc.org/be-connected/link-letters/>

Breakfast (\$1.50): Lunch (\$2.75):

Milk only: \$0.50

T— Breakfast bites

W— Egg, cheese, sausage slider

Th— Cheesy omelet

F— Sausage gravy breakfast

M 12/19— Cinnamon toast

Minh’s orange chicken

Ultimate beef nachos

Cuban sandwich

Chicken drumstick

Chicken nuggets

Breakfast time: 7:30AM—7:50 AM

Discovery A & B

Lunch 11:55 AM—12:15 PM Recess 12:15—12:40 PM

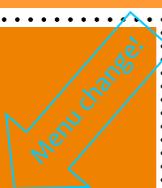
Discovery C & D

Lunch 10:55 AM—11:15 AM Recess 11:15—11:40 AM

Discovery E & F

Lunch 11:25 AM—11:45 AM Recess 11:45 AM—12:10 PM

- You may send cash or check with your child to school or you may pay for meals online at mypaymentsplus.com



Discovery A students worked collaboratively last week to edit writing for spelling. Together they compared writing to the sight word list and made changes to improve its readability.

Central Office Updates, continued

- **Winter and Recess:** At GRCDC, we go outside for recess every day, including the winter months. Students should bring snow pants, hats, gloves and boots each day to school during the winter. If your child does not have winter gear, we do have some extra items available in the office. Please note: If the wind chill is at or below zero, the students will stay inside for recess.
- **Winter Break** is shortened this year due to the state mandated increase in the number of school days and another state mandate for schools to follow the common calendar that is set by our area intermediate school district (Kent ISD). Please be aware and plan family trips to coincide with the planned days off from school. This is a reminder for you as we made efforts to get the word out about this as early as June of this year via a letter that was mailed home, in the Link Letter and in the printed school calendar.

Community Corner

Customer Assistance Day—Do you need utility assistance? Consumers Energy’s CARE program and DTE’s Low Income Self-Sufficiency Plan allows those who qualify to make affordable monthly payments based on your income. You must have income and qualify to receive bill payment assistance.

To find out more, you may attend Customer Assistance Day (CAD) on Friday, December 16, 2016 from 10:00 am—5:00 PM. CAD will take place at the LINC Gallery located at 1167 Madison Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507. For more information and to print out your applications, go to truenorthservices.org

Please arrange for your child to arrive at school between 7:45 - 8:00 am. Please sign your child in at the office if arrival is after 8:05 am.
Dismissal is 3:15 pm M, T, Th, F and 1:10 pm on Wednesdays