

Oxford School News

December 3, 2009

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

The past few weeks the school has been abuzz with activities and crawling with volunteers to make it all run so smoothly. Many thanks to Kathryn Levenson *and* Amy Garlin for organizing the **H1N1 Clinic**, and thanks to all who came to help. *Over 160 students were given the vaccine that day.* Many thanks to Rebecca Kormos *and* Brook Vinnedge for coordinating the **Spell-a-thon**. I am so pleased that we are doing an academic fundraiser this year. And, of course, the **Spell-a-thon** couldn't have been such a huge success without the help of the many grandparents who came and scored the tests. The proverb says, "It takes a village" and these past weeks have felt like we certainly have one at Oxford.—

Janet Levenson

School Calendar

12/7	SGC meeting, 6PM, Room 9
12/11	Spell-a-thon money due
12/17	Winter Fair, evening at school (<i>please note another change in date</i>)
12/21	Winter break begins
1/4/2010	School resumes
1/12/2010	PTA meeting, 6:30-8:00PM
1/18/2010	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Reminder: SPELL-a-THON

Please don't forget to collect and return all money by Friday, December 11th. Thank you!

PTA News

Reminder: The Winter Faire is coming on the evening of Thursday, December 17th (please note that the date has been changed again!).

Please contact your room parent for more information and to help out.

—Chryssy Meuris & Melanie Green, PTA Co-Presidents

Turn Off The TV

It is important to limit the amount of time your children are watching TV, especially on weeknights. Many thanks to Sophia Quintana's father, Gabi, for inspiring me to include a Turn-off-the TV activity in each week's newsletter. Please feel free to send in ideas for future newsletter issues. What does your family like to do together instead of watching TV? Here is this week's suggestion:

Younger students: Play "Can You Guess What is Different?" Everyone goes out of the room while one person stays behind and rearranges 5 things in the room (**changes a calendar to the wrong month, turns books upside down on a shelf, or other safe changes**). Then everyone returns to the room and tries to guess what is different.

Older students: Play "Fictionary". One person looks up a word in the dictionary and tells everyone else the word he/she has chosen. The others make up definitions for that word and the one who selected the word writes down the correct definition. He/she collects all of the definitions and reads them and everyone tries to guess which is the real definition.

Oxford's Annual Winter Holiday Food Basket Drive

Many Oxford families will have a hard time putting a special holiday meal on the table this year. Oxford volunteers are just beginning the holiday food drive to support them, and we need your financial support!



Please donate generously toward the cost of a full holiday meal - a fresh ham and all the fixings - **by sending cash or check (to Oxford PTA) in a marked envelope to your child's teacher, or putting it in the decorated collection box in the school office** (a full meal of fresh food for a family of 6 costs about \$100.00).

Please support this delicious Oxford seasonal tradition. Thank you!

Questions or comments can go to **Jean Fichtenkort** or **Laurie Peterson.**]

Berkeley Public Education Foundation Grants

Many of our teachers received grants from the Berkeley Public Education Foundation this year. We really appreciate the Foundations' support of projects such as **3rd grade folkdancing, 4th grade Bollywood, our annual 5th grade play called "Grandma's Hands", books for classroom libraries, an organic food box for 2nd graders, and so much more.**

Letter from School Governance Council Chair

Dear Oxford Community,

Recently, we had our second planning meeting to discuss questions of equity and inclusion at Oxford. During our meeting we had a great conversation about a lot of really hard and important things. While we were talking, I realized that there a lot of great things happening at Oxford that many parents don't know about, but that you might want to know. As your School Governance Council chair and with seven years at Oxford, I have a pretty good idea of the landscape of many of what the school offers our kids, so I decided to send out a little summary of some of the programs that take place kind of under the parent radar. I might have some of the details wrong, but you will get the picture:

Reading Coach volunteer program:

This program was established about four years ago by a group of parents, with Janet and Mary Burmester, to help bring in community volunteers to work with 3-5th graders on their reading comprehension and fluency (speed). I think there are currently about 25 volunteers and something like 50 kids getting literacy support. Parent and PTA co-Prez Chrissy Meuris runs this program (cmeuris@lmi.net).

Snapshot Meetings:

Did you know that twice a year, each teacher meets with Janet and a group of specialists and discusses each and every one of our children's academic, social, and health needs? These meetings then lead to any needed support for our kids -- in the classroom, in the community, or on the yard.

Scholars Program:

Our **AMAZING Scholars Program** is in its second year. In this program, **4th and 5th grade African American and Latino students and those underrepresented at the college level who scored at proficient or above in last year's standardized tests** meet once a month on a Saturday. They engage in a variety of enriching activities. Students are also paired with a college-aged mentor who spends time with them in and out of school.

Assessment Wall:

Did you know that the school tracks the progress of each child's reading on an "Assessment Wall"? They use little post-its that are anonymously coded to track the progress of each student in a visual way. The post-its are color coded by grade, and include a system of indicating kids who are receiving different interventions, who are new to the school, who are special education students, etc. That way they can see who are the outliers on either end, providing more challenging options to the higher readers and making sure the lower level readers are getting the support they need.

Counseling:

Through **Bay Area Children First**, we have a counseling contract. The therapist, **Cathy Carr**, also sometimes advises with parents. Our Full Inclusion teacher, **Andrea Hosmer**, also offers some social skills groups for kids who can use some extra help learning skills for more positive interactions with their peers. I like this because the groups are fun and it seems like they leave the kids feeling good about themselves instead of criticized for acting out.

Math Club

This is the second year that we have had an afterschool **Math Club** to help students who need more support in learning their basic math facts and who need help developing basic number sense. The program is run by two volunteer educational therapists and two community volunteers. **Bill Joyce**, our resource teacher, oversees the program.

This year we are focused on 2nd graders only. If you would like to help with the program, you can contact **Bill Joyce** at school.

Reading Specialist:

Our amazing reading specialist team - Joal Arvanigian and Mary Burmester, as well as Andrea our Special Education Full Inclusion teacher and Bill Joyce, our Resource Specialist, provide a variety of literacy supports for kids. They run small groups as well as daily individual Reading Recovery for our lowest 1st grade readers.

B.E.S.T. (I am not sure what this stands for):

Last year the school implemented this new social skills program and philosophy. For the first time since I have had kids at Oxford there are clearly defined rules of behavior and respect in the school and it is really making a difference. As a part of this, four children are given “**Above and Beyond Awards**” each week at Community Meeting on Friday morning, recognizing extraordinarily respectful and caring behavior to their peers.

In addition, we have OASIS, the rockin’ afterschool program that now offers a myriad of classes, a volunteer gardening teacher... and, of course, a great teaching staff.

I know this is long, but there is so much to share.
Best,

Judy, Mom of Talia, Grade 3 (and Kobi who graduated last year)

P.S. Please join us at our next **SGC** meeting on **December 7th at 6PM in Room 9.**

Oxford Scholars

Many of you have asked what this program is since receiving the recorded message in error last week. Oxford Scholars is a program modeled after the successful program at Stiles Hall, UC Berkeley, called Scholars to Cal. It supports students who come from backgrounds that are traditionally underrepresented at the college level. Any 4th and 5th grader who scores proficient or advanced on the CA state tests (CST) is invited to participate in the program. We run a Saturday class once per month and pair each Scholar with a college-aged mentor who spends time with them in and out of school. The goal of the program is to strengthen the cohort of already academically successful students to support each other in the middle school and high school years. Our Scholars go on to participate in the program in middle and high school.

Real Estate Agent Donates \$500



One of our parents, Monika Mayer, referred someone to a real estate agent named **Cordula Didier**. Ms. Didier was able to sell their home so she donated **\$500 to our school** in appreciation of the referral. She will donate **\$500 to the school of choice** every time someone refers a client that results in a sale. *Please pass the word on to family and friends!*



Safe Routes to School Update

Oxford has been awarded a **\$500 grant** from *Safe Routes to Schools* for bike racks! Our tentative plan is to install two (5-bike) racks: one outside the Principal’s office window and one on the lower yard. If you want to give input about this or can help with the installation of the racks, please contact me.

-Jed Waldman

Oxford's Wonderful Gardening Instructor



As you may know, we have a volunteer gardening instructor, **Nick Rosenstock**, who has been gardening with our kids for the past few months. He is working on his Ph.D. in ecology at UC Berkeley and has been devoting 5-10 hours a week to teaching our kids and revamping our vegetable garden.

We are going to be presenting Nick with a thank you gift for all his hard work at the community meeting on **December 4th** (*as he will be gone for much of December and January*).

If you would like to contribute to this gift, you can contact **Keri Troutman**.

Letter from Gardening Teacher

Hi Oxford Parents,

This is **Nick Rosenstock** the Oxford Gardening instructor. I have some things to let you folks know about and a number of requests.

1. Basic Update:

As you may recall, I am a PhD student in my final year of study at Berkeley. I work with the kids Tuesday and Thursday mornings. I see each class once every two weeks, half the class at a time for 30 minutes. We have been very active in the garden. The kids have been turning the soil, weeding, planting seeds

for starts, planting starts, and setting up trellises for climbing peas. In the process of this they have (hopefully) been learning about soil fauna (beetles, worms, isopods), fungi, pollinators, what plants need to grow (air, water, nutrients, sun) perennials vs. annuals, and the value of diversification. We now have peas, carrots, lettuce (many varieties), collard greens, and chard growing and will soon add strawberries, kale, onions, and cabbage. All of the kids are eager to eat some of our produce but we are still weeks away from that being possible. So far we have been working exclusively on the lower garden. Soon, we will begin on the upper garden. My idea is to have vegetables in the lower garden, and use the upper beds for native plants (one bed) herbs (one or two beds) and flowers (one or two beds).

2. Weekend Watering:

I am at school Tuesdays and Thursdays and I water when I am there. Until the rains come (with higher frequency) or we get the drip irrigation system set up the garden needs to be watered on the weekends. Until now, **Polly Pagenheart** has been helping with this (*thanks very much, Polly*), but I think it would be easy to share this job. It would be great if some parents could organize a small group to do this. If 5-10 folks who live in the area could have a small email list I think this could be very easy. Basic instructions for watering are as follows:

Use the hose on the lower garden to water the whole lower garden. **It is VERY IMPORTANT THAT SOME EXTRA ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO THE STARTS;** they are on the walls of the lower garden at the end, near the tall wall.

Use the hose next to the school to water the upper garden. That hose needs a key to turn it on. That key is located on top of the gardening shed on the lower corner of the roof (**out of the kids eyesight**) nearest to the school (*stand on the straw bale and anyone over five feet tall can reach it I believe*). All told the watering takes about 20 minutes.

3. Drip Irrigation:

There was, in the past, drip irrigation set up. I uprooted most of this when I began there because it was in the way. We should have nearly everything we need to set it back up. There is a sensor which I believe functions off rainwater to determine when to water. I would like to have this set back up. I would like to learn how to do this, but I do not have time to take this on myself. Could a couple parents who know about setting up drip irrigation take the

reins and set this back up? I was imagining meeting with one or two of you and showing you what we had, working out a list of what we need (*not much I believe*), and then on some day, setting it up.

4. More Parent Involvement:

I will be gone for **all of January and half of February**, and most likely leave the Bay Area *after May or June*. It is entirely unclear what will happen to the garden after that. I am not looking for one parent to take the reins because that puts too much on one set of shoulders. It would be great to have a parent or two working with their kids (and ideally with a couple classes on the days their kids have gardening) in the garden, ideally with some regularity. This means coming in to the garden **once every two weeks for a couple hours** and getting your hands dirty. Maybe amongst the 200 or so kids I work with we could have 10-15 parents total who take a semi-active role in the garden. This will create community and provide for some institutional memory when I am not here. Below is a spreadsheet with the gardening schedule. Please email me if you think you would like to come. **Polly Pagenheart** has been coming in on the days her child has gardening and having the extra set of eyes and lungs has really been a big help to me and to the kids (*thanks, Polly*). I really think, in this case, the more the merrier.

5. Filling In While I'm Gone:

I am gone **December 16th until February 9th**, which realistically means my last day until mid-February will be Thursday, December 10th. I will be visiting family in Austria and Germany, and doing research in Sweden during this time. If we can get parents involved then I think they could take the reins (again, once every two weeks for 2-3 hours is all we need). Otherwise there will be no gardening during this period, which is a shame because this is when we should start being able to harvest a lot of the things we have been planting.

So, please email or call me if you are willing to:

- help out with weekend watering
- help set up the drip irrigation system
- come to work with the kids during the week

I will put people in touch with each other to get some loops of communication going that do not necessarily require my involvement.

--Nick Rosenstock

Gardening Schedule

Dates	Day	Time	Grade	Teacher
Week 1	Tues.	9:35 - 10:35	K	Harris
10/6, 10/08	Tues.	10:40 - 11:40	3rd	Owens
10/20, 10/22	Tues.	11:55 - 12:55	1st	McGilvrey
11/3, 11/5				
11/17, 11/19				
12/1, 12/3	Thurs.	8:30 - 9:30	2nd	Della Penna
	Thurs.	9:35 - 10:35	K	Henderson
Week 2	Tues.	9:35 - 10:35	K	Vines-Aquino
10/13, 10/15	Tues.	10:40 - 11:40	3rd	Archuletta
10/27, 10/29	Tues.	11:55 - 12:55	2nd	Nielson
11/10, 11/12				
11/24, 11/26				
12/8, 12/10	Thurs.	8:30 - 9:30	2nd	Sheppard
	Thurs.	9:35 - 10:35	1st	Snell

Lost and Found

There are many jackets and sweaters and sweatshirts in the **Lost and Found** box in the rotunda area near the cafeteria. We will be giving away any unclaimed items **before the winter holiday**. Please write your children's names in their jackets so that we can return them to you should they leave them lying around the school.

Reporting Absences

If your student is absent, please call the school office or send an email to **Lety Marquez** letting her know why they won't be (or weren't) at school. Emails to the principal or teachers require extra steps in reporting attendance to Lety so please follow this procedure.

BUSD A+ News Update Available Electronically by Subscription

The **BUSD A+ News Update** reports on the many accomplishments of our students, teachers and staff, and gives highlights of our community partnerships, and Board and administrative actions. This is the second season of the newsletter, which is primarily distributed electronically, through the District website and Etrees. BUSD encourages you to subscribe to receive it directly, electronically every month. To do so, send an email to: **subscribeA+@berkeley.k12.ca.us** and write **Subscribe** in the subject line.

Oxford E-Tree

If you want to receive important information electronically, you should subscribe to **Oxford's e-tree**. Only subscribers may post and have moved to a moderated format to ensure that only school-related topics are posted. To subscribe to the list, send a blank email to:

everyone-subscribe@oxfordelementary.org

Instructions for subscribing and unsubscribing will also appear automatically at the bottom of all emails.

Bring us Your Ink Cartridges:

We recycle ink cartridges to raise money for the classrooms. We get \$1.00 for each laser ink cartridge and \$0.50 for each ink jet cartridge. Please bring yours to the box outside the office.

Target's "Take Charge of Education®" Program:

If you use your Target® Visa® or Target® Card, Oxford school *can receive a percentage of the amount of each purchase as a cash donation from Target through the Take Charge of Education® program.*

Just visit target.com/tcoe, or call 1-800-316-6142 to designate our school.

Submissions for the Oxford School Newsletter

Please email submissions to:

OxfordSchoolNewsletter@gmail.com as attached **MS Word documents**. Submissions received by Fridays will go out in the Newsletter the following Thursday. Please send an email to the same address if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions. *Thank you.*