



JANUARY 27, 2012 - VOLUME 19, NUMBER 19 - 88th DAY OF SCHOOL

Thornhill PFC eNews

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FIFTH GRADERS OFF TO MARIN WEDNESDAY!

On Wednesday, Thornhill's intrepid 5th graders will trek (via comfy vehicles) to the **coastal wonders of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for three days and two nights of exploring, discovering, learning, hiking (rain or shine!), tide-pooling and, we hope, sleeping.** Considered one of the great highlights of the Thornhill years, this annual trip inspires students to strengthen their connection with nature through teamwork and hands-on **environmental education.** Cars, gear and kids will descend on the Thornhill playground at **9:30 a.m. Wednesday to load up and will return around 2:30 p.m. Friday.** Finally, lets give a special shout-out to the heroic adults who will accompany the students: our wonderful 5th grade teachers, Ms. Young and Mr. Wilkins, and parent chaperones Diane Bessette, Shannon Faucette, Joel Goldberg, Alexander (Sasha) Itsekson, Lisa McFadin, Pamela Smith, Bob Staples and Bill Swanson. **Thank you!**



CALENDAR

[Benefit Catalog is Online Now!](#)

Jan. 27 - In Service (Prof. Dev.) Day (NO SCHOOL)

Jan. 30-Feb. 3 - NO ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Jan. 31-Feb. 9 – Benefit Instant Wine Cellar Wine Drive

Feb. 1-3, Fifth Grade Marin Field Trip

Feb. 3 - Lunar New Year Parade, 1:00 PM

Feb. 6 - Enrichment Class Session 2 Begins

Feb. 10 - Benefit Donations Deadline

Feb. 14 - Valentine's Day - 100th Day of School and 1000th day for 5th graders!

Feb. 20 - Presidents' Day Holiday (NO SCHOOL)

Feb. 21 - School Site Council Mtg. 3:45 PM

Feb. 24 - School Site Oratorical Contest

Feb. 26 - Benefit BSDD RSVPs Deadline

Mar. 1 - Benefit RSVPs Due

Mar. 4 - Benefit Wine Donations - Last Day

Mar. 10 - "An Evening Under the Stars" [School Benefit and Auction!](#) 7:00 PM

Mar. 12-14 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - MINIMUM DAYS

PRINCIPAL'S THUNDERCLAP

How Are We Doing?

Dear Thornhill Families,

People sometimes ask me: What do you folks do on those **Inservice Days** when the kids aren't there? On Friday the staff is at school **reviewing our work so far this year, developing a scope and sequence description of our writing program, discussing the most recent performance data of the children and planning intervention support.** Our regular school schedule doesn't afford us a lot of reflection time, and I know this type of day is inconvenient for parents, so I want to let you know we appreciate the time to improve our work.



Last week was emotionally difficult for some families as teachers met with them to talk about the possible need for their child to spend more time in a particular grade level. This is a touchy subject for many people as there are so many negative feelings around it. We may use words like "fail, flunk, held back, or retained" to refer to the kids who just need more time. Some children need more time for their own development before they move on to the next phase of their education. It is not a fault of the child if he/she needs more time. In fact, it is an institutional problem that we have children move lockstep through the curriculum. We need to change our school culture to make it ok for some children to take 7 years to go through the 6 years of elementary curriculum without the students, their families and teachers feeling shame and guilt. **Children simply do not all grow at the same rate!** If your child's teacher has broached the topic with you, rest assured that it was not an easy decision, nor a flippant one. We are keenly aware of all the studies about retention and possible outcomes. We don't bring it up because we don't like your child, or think they're stupid. **We ask your help in planning out the best course of action for your child's education.** We want to provide intervention support so that we can avoid retention.

We typically don't recommend retention in upper grades because kids are more socially aware and tend to see that as a punishment. Their social awareness complicates the situation because even though they may need extra time in grade level they become so ashamed that it doesn't help. So then the problem becomes, **how can we support students and parents to help children catch up?** I have encouraged my upper grade teachers to meet with parents of low performing students to develop intervention plans, and I will be reviewing those plans on Friday. Unlike many Oakland schools we do not have an afterschool academic program, (lack of funding) so we will need your help! If you review your upper grade child's academic performance and find it below your expectations, please contact your child's teacher or me to look at your options.

Just as we give feedback to you about your child's performance, it is **helpful to us when you give us feedback**. We are continuing our work on the **School Site Plan and welcome suggestions about things we need to work on and your opinions about what we're doing well**. Do you think we should have as many enrichment classes during the school day as we do? More? Are we doing well in the basic curriculum, school culture, parent involvement, supporting struggling students, enriching the curriculum? The School Site Plan will include descriptions of all the programs happening at Thornhill and we don't want to miss anything! It's a rather lengthy document, ultimately approved by the School Site Council and submitted to the Board of Education. ~ Mel Stenger, principal@thornhillschool.org



ENROLL NOW FOR ENRICHMENT CLASSES SESSION 2

Enrollment has begun for Thornhill's Afterschool Enrichment classes and the next session begins on February 6, 2012. Please remember to register your children in the coming week. We have put together a program that tries to address many interests and needs. We have added two new classes in this session: Quickstart Tennis and Public Speaking/Mock Trial. You should have received the paper flyer packets in your childrens' backpacks this week. You can also view and print all enrichment program flyers from the Thornhill school website:

<http://www.thornhillschool.org/about-our-school/before-and-after-school-programs/>

Also on the website is an overview of the week's schedule of classes as well as the locations for the classes. Just a reminder that we switched to a two session per year model. Therefore, you will notice on the flyers that classes seem more expensive. This is because the session is longer with more classes as a result. So, while the total cost is more expensive, the per class cost is in the same range. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this change. We look forward to a fun-filled session. We imagine that your children will have a great time in some of these offerings! Thanks so much. ~ Dina Hankin, VP of Enrichment, vpnrichment@thornhillschool.org

IN-SERVICE DAY JAN. 27

In case you're wondering what is an "In Service" day (or "Professional Development Day")?... **January 27 will be an in-service day when the faculty will review how the students are doing**. Much of the day will be taken up with teachers collaborating in grade level teams planning intervention for children not performing at grade level.

WIN THE ZIN!

Carnival games are always so fun, but who really needs another oversized stuffed animal in their house? Wouldn't it be awesome if you could walk away from a carnival game with, say, a bottle of wine? Well, friends, limber up those wrists, and wet your whistle because the carnies are heading to Uptown. Yes, that's right! **On March 10 you will have the chance to play the carnival game of your dreams. Back by popular demand: the Wine Toss!** Imagine row upon row of wine bottles laid out in front of you and several rings in your hand. Take aim, toss a ring, and walk away with wine every time your ring lands around a bottle. While all bottles will have a value of at least \$15, there will be many high-end bottles in the mix to aim for, such as a magnum of 2007 Rock Wall Cabernet Sauvignon valued at \$120 among others! Any bottles that aren't won by the end of the game will be packaged up and offered for bidding as an instant wine cellar.



Fruity, Oaky or Earthy: We Need Your Wine

To make the Wine Toss a BIG hit, we **need your donations**. We're seeking many bottles of wine valued at \$15 or more. Please **drop off your tax-deductible gift to the office by March 4**. Also, if you have a connection to a wine cellar or distributor, please contact Nancy at benefit@thornhillschool.org. Thank you!

is sponsoring a meeting about this important topic. Please come to share your thoughts and questions for the guest speakers and to hear what OUSD is already doing to address concerns. For more information, visit montclairsic.org.

When: Thursday, February 2nd, 6:45-7 Social, 7-9 Meeting

Where: Montclair Presbyterian, 5701 Thornhill Rd.

Topic: Safety and Traffic/Pedestrian Issues in and Around the Schools

Guest Speakers: Chief Williams & Tim White of OUSD

AVOID THE SMASH & GRAB

Remember last year when we had a rash of these smash and grabs in the back church parking lot? This is a friendly reminder, especially for new parents, to never leave a purse or briefcase in your car - it's too easy in the city for someone to break a window -- **avoid the smash and grab!** Last week, there were some **car break-ins** in front of MCPC across from the school, involving parents who had left handbags on the front seat of a car. Please remember to **take your belongings with you** when you drop your kids off or pick them up and watch out for each other in the busy morning and afternoon commutes.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SF OPERA

Ms. V. Carter's class has been chosen to be a part of a partnership with the San Francisco Opera this year. It's an opportunity to enhance the children's education with **arts-based learning**. It incorporates the study of language, history and culture and can help motivate students to learn about these subjects through stories. Ms. V. Carter will be working with SFO staff and teach artists to integrate learning about the art form of the opera into the classroom. This may include seeing performances in school and possibly creating their own original opera, from text and music to rehearsal and performance. ~ Joanna Dang, 2nd Grade Correspondent, Ms. V. Carter



WITH GRATITUDE

This week, special thanks go to:

5th grade teachers Ms. Young and Mr. Wilkins, **and parents** Diane Bessette, Shannon Faucette, Joel Goldberg, Alexander (Sasha) Itsekson, Lisa McFadin, Pamela Smith, Bob Staples and Bill Swanson for chaperoning our fifth graders as they head off to their Marin adventure!

If you want to share a thank-you, send the name and brief reason for gratitude to newsletter@thornhillschool.org by Wednesdays at 3PM.

HELP WANTED

Here's what we need around school this week:

- Remember to **take your belongings with you** when you drop-off or pick-up your child - do NOT leave your bag, briefcase, or packages visible in your car to avoid break-ins.



If you need help with something for school: email who, what, when, where and why to newsletter@thornhillschool.org by Wednesdays at 3PM.



HANDY LINKS

[OUSD Calendar 2011-2012](#) – official school district calendar

[OUSD Enrollment Link](#) – enrollment page on school district website

[OUSD Menus](#) – menus page on the OUSD website

[OUSD NetTrek Website](#) – for teachers and parents, user name: [ousdtrek](#) /

password: [ousdtrek](#)

[Thornhill School Website](#) – bookmark this to stay current on school happenings!

[Thornhill School Library](#) – scroll down to find the Thornhill link

[Box Tops for Education](#) – save grocery box tops and put in bright blue box in school office

[Scrip Program](#) – free money for our school!

[Thornhill PFC](#) – all about your Parent-Faculty Club

[School Calendar](#) – calendar page on the school website

[Thornhill PFC Yahoo Group](#) – message board for Thornhill families, teachers and staff

[Thornhill Families Facebook Page](#) – unofficial Facebook group for Thornhill families

[Lost and Found](#) – check the rack in the school lobby, as items are donated monthly to charity

ABOUT THE E-NEWS

The Thornhill Parent-Faculty Club (PFC) eNews team publishes this weekly newsletter each Friday in the school year to communicate school, PFC and OUSD news, events and info. This eNews is best viewed in a browser window. [Email submissions to our Newsletter Chair](#) Marady Hill by 3PM Wednesdays for approval, including (preferably) Word or Text files with NO formatting and photos preferably as 150 x 150, 72 dpi JPG

or GIFs. Submissions may be edited, usually for spelling, grammar, brevity and clarity. Advertising is not accepted. [Sign-up here to get the newsletter via email](#). THANK YOU to everyone who submits articles and to Class Correspondents Vicky Griffin (K), Deepak Pateriya (1st), Joanna Dang (2nd), Janet Allen (3rd), Carrie McKiernan (4th) and Nancy Murr (5th), PFC Board Members, Teachers, Staff, [Co-VPs of Communications](#) Natalie Henrich and Marady Hill, [PFC President](#) Bree Lancaster and [Principal](#) Mel Stenger. Member [Oakland Unified School District \(OUSD\)](#). To contact Thornhill Elementary School, write to 5880 Thornhill Drive, Oakland, CA 94611; call (510) 339-6800, fax (510) 339-6801 or visit the Thornhill School website at www.thornhillschool.org.

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