



FEBRUARY 17, 2012 - VOLUME 19, NUMBER 22 - 104th DAY OF SCHOOL

Thornhill PFC eNews

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VOLUNTEERING: KINDERGARTEN CHAIR

Looking for the perfect way to connect with the new families that will be joining us here at Thornhill next year? Think about volunteering to be a Kindergarten Chair! No experience is

required. Each year, two volunteers serve as a welcoming committee to answer questions for all the new families joining us. If you have a kindergartener starting next year and already know your way around this is a great job for you! Basically, you are a host/hostess. As new Kindergartners enroll, you set up a yahoo group, coordinate and attend a summer of playdates for the kids and families to get to know each other. Later in the year you plan information nights and new family tours for the next incoming Kindergartners. It is a fun way to serve your school and represent the great community that we have. If you'd like to know more, please contact Kate Walker or Karin Foust via kindergarten@thornhillschool.org; we'd be happy to tell you more!



CALENDAR

[Benefit Catalog is Online Now!](#)

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

Feb. 27 - Online Auction begins

Mar. 1 - Benefit RSVPs Due

Mar. 2 - Online Auction ends

Mar. 4 - Wine Drive last day

Mar. 10 - "An Evening Under the Stars" [School Benefit and Auction!](#) 6 - 11 PM

Mar. 14-16 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - MINIMUM DAYS

Mar. 20 - School Site Council Mtg. 3:45 PM

Mar. 21 - PFC General Meeting 6:30 PM @ MPR

Mar. 30 - Cesar Chavez Day (NO SCHOOL)



PRINCIPAL'S THUNDERCLAP

Helping Your Child Become a Better Writer

Dear Thornhill Families,

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about the scope and sequence of our writing curriculum here at Thornhill. Some commented that she appreciated the summary, and she would like some **pointers on how to help her child learn to write better**. These tips, drawn from the experiences of the writing coaches, may help:



- **Clarify the assignment.** Ask your child to explain the assignment to you. He needs to understand the purpose before he begins the task.
- **Clarify the content.** Ask your child to tell you the main point she wants to make. If she can explain her ideas first, the writing will be easier.
- **Check the evidence.** Do the examples or anecdotes support your child's main idea?
- **Check the organization.** If it is an essay, see if the teacher has given specific instructions about the introduction, body paragraphs or conclusion.

If your child is **reacting negatively** to an assignment, ask her to tell you why. If you help her think her ideas through, she may be able to write an effective paper based on her objections to the assignment. Many children resist writing because they don't know where to start, are afraid to make mistakes with mechanics or spelling, or hate to re-write the final copy. Getting started can be eased by using brainstorming, graphic organizers, or looking at samples. Revision and editing can be made easier by keyboarding which eliminates the need to rewrite the whole thing. And fear of mistakes can be reduced by how the adult approaches supporting the child writer.

Sometimes all your child needs is coaching once they have the beginnings of a piece of writing. You can read more on the [WriterCoach Connection web site](#).

- **Start by** asking your child, "How can I help you?" As a coach, your role is to listen and help your child figure out what he is trying to say.
- **Listen** to your child read the at least 2 sentences aloud without interrupting. If you interrupt, you risk interfering in your child's thinking process.
- **Find strengths** in your child's writing and praise them when you find them. Point to the phrase, sentence or paragraph and read it aloud. Tell her why it's effective.
- **If something is unclear** ask for more information. Ask questions about what your child is trying to communicate. Don't criticize or give the answer, but help him find his own answers.
- **Don't correct** things on the first rough draft. Let her write freely to promote writing fluency and to get the thoughts down. After the first draft work with your child to edit the work. Resist the temptation to make the paper "perfect" from your point of view.
- **Respect** your child as a writer. The "voice" he uses should be his, not yours. Offer a suggestion, but remember that your child must learn to do the thinking and writing.

Who knows, maybe you have a blossoming writer in your home! ~ Mel Stenger, principal@thornhillschool.org



MATCHING GIFTS

We've received 8-10 donations from employers who have Matching Gift Programs, most recently from Wells Fargo. Please consider exploring this option at your place of employment.

WELCOME TO ADAM SCHRAFT, K-2 MUSIC TEACHER

Please give a **warm welcome to Adam Schraft who has come to Thornhill as our new K-2 Music Instructor**. Natalie Henrich conducted the following interview with Adam:

Where did you work before coming to Thornhill?

For the last six years I worked as an Education Program Manager for Headlands Institute (now Nature Bridge at the Marin Headlands). I remember Thornhill's field trips to the Headlands during my tenure there. I hear the 5th grade had a wonderful trip just a few weeks ago! I have run outdoor adventure programs, led youth conferences in both environmental leadership and the arts and taught general music, theater and choir at the elementary school level. In addition to my work at Thornhill, I direct a children's chorus at the German American School in Menlo Park. I am currently in graduate school at Cal State East Bay, pursuing my single subject credential in music.

Tell us about your family – pets? kids?

I live in Berkeley, about 15 minutes from Thornhill. My partner Elisa and I are looking to move closer to Oakland in the fall. No kids....yet. We currently get our puppy fix via two surrogate dogs Daisy and Pepita that live next door.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to make music with friends and see live music as often as I can. I also love to be outdoors: hiking, camping, backpacking and biking are my favorite outdoor activities.

Anything else that you'd like us to know about you?

I have circumnavigated the globe and can freestyle rhyme. I have lived in California, New Mexico and Oregon though I originally hail from Massachusetts. I play guitar, piano, percussion and sing. As part of my graduate program at Cal State East Bay I am learning all of the primary band and orchestra instruments. Right now I am working on alto saxophone. I'd love to learn the ukulele. I believe that everyone is innately musical (if you can walk, you can dance, if you can talk you can sing) and that everyone has a right to music. I'm very excited to join the team at Thornhill and look forward to making music with your children!

BENEFIT NEWS

Have you purchased your tickets to the Annual School Benefit, An Evening Under The Stars? Its not too late! You really don't want to miss out on all the fun. There will be terrific food catered by our own Carrie and Adam Dove, of Dove Catering, Music by The Smokin J's, unbelievable Silent and Live Auction Items and games to play. My favorite is the wine toss. You get three rings for \$10 and if it lands on a bottle, you get to keep it. Each bottle of wine is worth at least \$15 and some are worth over \$100. To register and purchase tickets, visit our [auction website](#).



"Envisioning a brighter future for our children"

Wine Drive Continues – Its not too late to donate a bottle of wine. Feel free to **drop it off curbside** in the morning when you drop off your child. Our greeters will be collecting those bottles through the end of February. If you would rather walk your bottle into the school, please **bring it to the office** for drop off. We ask that the bottle be **worth at least \$15**. These will be used for the wine toss as well as the Instant Wine Cellar, a Live Auction favorite.

Curbside Promotions – If you are a curbside drop off parent then you may have begun to notice some

extra activity in the morning. Our auction event hosts are greeting the drop off parents in festive and fun ways, to show off their parties and events. Don't miss the Atlas family as they may be wielding cookies, and you never know what will show up with the Breaking Dawn gals, I'm told Edward and Jacob may be there to greet you!

Help needed – photographers needed to take photos for a school slide show. For more information, contact benefitparty@thornhillschool.org.

WATCH OUT

Be watchful! A parent reported an **incident from last Friday morning**. She parked to bring in her children. An older gentleman opened the front passenger door and said "Oh, were you waiting for me? You look like my ex-wife?" He looked a bit confused, closed the door and walked off up Thornhill. White male, 5'10", late 50's-early 60's, brown jacket, tan pants, light hair, spoke with an accent. Needless to say, it was very odd and maybe just a heads-up to all of us that when pulling up to school during non-busy hours, to make sure our **car doors are locked until we are ready to exit**.



1,000 DAYS OF LEARNING FOR FIFTH GRADERS

In addition to this week's Valentine's Day and 100 Day celebrations, the fifth graders also had a special day to commemorate – their **1000th day of school** at Thornhill! Here's how our fifth graders celebrated and learned on their 1000th day:

Collectively, as a class we:

- did 1,000 jumping jacks
- said 1,000 "uhms" and "likes" (a 5th grader's two favorite words!)
- licked a lollipop 1,000 times
- rubbed our hands together 1,000 times to stay warm

We expressed 1,000 in creative ways, such as:

- 1,000 equals a million who lost three zeros
- 1,000 equals 83 dozen cookies plus 4 more from the really nice baker
- 1,000 means all 5 Little Ducks definitely came back to 200 different mama ducks
- 1,000 equals 17.2 quintillion times 953.738 trillion times zero plus 1,000

Students wrote about, "What's the most important thing I've learned in 1,000 days of school"

- "One needs to be a good role model" Jarryn Anderson
- "Definitely reading, because it lays the foundations for everything" Aaron Shalf
- "Things we learned at the Marin Headlands, like taking care of our environment" Serena Siow
- "To be friendly and to think of others" Addie Duchin
- "math, because it's everywhere in the world" Aria Chang

Students wrote about, "What will I be doing/looking forward to 1,000 school days from now"

- Studying ...advanced math
- ... foreign languages
- ... biology and chemistry
- ... being in school plays
- ... doing sports such as soccer and cross country, and after school clubs
- ... dealing with high school life...

Other fifth graders reflected on what life was like 1000 days ago:

"1000 days ago, I was but a second grader. My life was easy and carefree, full of playdates and no responsibilities"

"I didn't like math; I also didn't even know how to multiply. I liked to draw and do science."

And they fast-forwarded 1000 days into the future:

"1000 days from now, I will have a very super duper awesome life. I will be on the girls AAA Sharks, I will have a slice of bacon in my hands and some M&M's in my pocket."

"I will be in middle school at OSA applying for Oakland Tech or staying at OSA. I'd probably be having good grades, like straight A's"

"I expect to be in my room, with the door locked, listening to rock and roll and I will be playing on my computer and playing video games. I would only stop to answer my iphone 7."

Looks like our fifth graders have learned a great deal at Thornhill and have very optimistic views toward the future! Congratulations to the Thornhill Class of 2012!

SURVEY

To get more information from families about our school's strengths and areas in which we need improvement, you should have received a copy of a survey. **Please take a few moments to complete the survey and return it to your child's teacher.** You can also do the survey online, in which case you should print out the last page and sign it and return that to your child's teacher. Children will be recognized

in every classroom for returning the completed survey or a signed final page from doing it online. Because some questions are specific to each child's experience we are asking that a parent complete a survey for each child attending Thornhill. We are shooting for 100% participation!

Survey Instructions

(copy and paste in browser) <http://www.wested.org/parent> or [Login here](#)

Parent School Climate Survey, 2011-12 **Thornhill Elementary**

Use the following login (all numbers) and password (all lower case letters) and click the Login button:

Login: **6002216**

Password: **fdmxxpgg**

Version en Espanol: http://surveys.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/welcome/login?x-surv_def_id=91&x-lang=es

It only takes a few moments to lend your voice to gathering information for our schools success. Won't you help us in this way?



WITH GRATITUDE

This week, special thanks go to:

Benefit and Auction Team for working so hard in the past few weeks to get us ready for a wonderful night in support of our school!

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:

- We want you to fill out the **survey** (see article above)



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](#) – menu 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. It is best viewed in a browser window. [Email submissions to our Newsletter Chair](#) Marady Hill by 3PM Wednesdays for approval, including Word or Text files with links and no formatting and photos preferably as 150 x 150, 72 dpi JPG or GIFs.

Submissions may be edited 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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