

Mustang Message

We're Building Tomorrow

November 23, 2011

Franconia Elementary



When is renovation going to be complete?

Our anticipated completion date of December 2011 has been delayed to late February 2012. While we are still waiting for the new building to be built, there are plenty of exciting things happening inside the building. New doors that brighten up the main corridor are a welcome addition, as well as the students' hand-painted tiles that are going up around the school. We can't wait until the project is complete; it's going to be incredible!

A Message from the Principal...

Teachers who effectively implement Best Practice for Teaching and Learning are differentiating instruction to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students. So what does it mean for your child to be in a classroom where "best practices" are an integral part of the daily routine?

Best Practices for Teaching and Learning are made up of the three key components that all teachers in Fairfax County are asked to meet. Teachers: create a student-centered environment; assess student learning; and plan and teach for student learning.

When teachers create a student-centered environment, they are paying close attention to the arrangement of the classroom. They look for ways to organize the classroom to provide a variety of learning opportunities for children that support whole group, small group, and independent learning experiences. Teachers are also seeking ways to create a safe and positive environment that helps students see themselves as a part of the classroom community and feel free to take risks. Building relationships is the last component of building a student-centered environment. Teachers work to build collaborative and respectful relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. They consistently encourage, support, and appropriately challenge students to ensure success.

Teachers assess student learning by goal setting and reflection, checking for understanding, and assessment. To set goals, teachers develop and communicate learning targets; define success in reaching those targets; and provide opportunities for students to set goals, measure their progress, and reflect on accomplishments. When checking for understanding, teachers use a range of approaches to identify what students have learned, instructional gaps, areas in which students have exceeded expectations, and the questions students wish to explore. Assessments are used to evaluate student understanding of specific concepts and skills to demonstrate that the goals of instruction are met.

When teachers plan and teach for student learning, they focus on content knowledge, engagement, and teacher collaboration. Developing a deep understanding of content areas helps teachers design and differentiate learning that is relevant and challenging. Teachers also seek to actively engage, challenge, and motivate students. They provide varied opportunities for students to practice and process new information. Teachers work frequently in collaborative learning teams to analyze data and plan for instruction and assessment.

Utilizing best practices in schools provides a better, more meaningful learning experience for students with varied needs. They truly help us customize learning to support all students!

Merrell V. Dade
Principal

Plan for inclement weather now

While it's sunny and 65 degrees outside, we need to remember winter is just around the corner. Even though it's hard to predict exactly what kind of winter we will have, we can plan ahead for inclement weather or other emergency situations that may necessitate a change in the school schedule.

FCPS has several schedules established that are used when conditions threaten the safety of children who walk or ride the school buses to school. These schedules are: *1) keep schools closed all day; 2) open schools two hours late; and 3) close schools two hours early.*

If schools open two hours late, Franconia's hours are:
Monday-Friday: 10:55 a.m.-3:35 p.m.

If schools close two hours early, Franconia's hours are:
Monday-Friday: 8:55 a.m.-1:35 p.m.

In cases of inclement weather or emergency situations, there are many ways for parents to get informed.

1. Tune into local radio or television stations (including cable Channel 21, a channel programmed by FCPS), which are notified as soon a decision is made.
2. Information is received via email from the FCPS *Keep in Touch* notification system
3. Go to <http://www.fcps.edu/news/emerg.htm>.

Picture Make-up day on Wednesday, November 30

Photographers from Splendid Portraits will at Franconia ES on Wednesday to take pictures of students who did not get them taken in October and those who need to have pictures retaken. If photos were taken previously but parents did not want them, those photos must be returned on the make-up day.



Holiday support available

If your family needs assistance during the upcoming winter holidays, schools can help. Contact the guidance counselor, Sofia Echaide, or parent liaison, Odette Boyce, at (703) 822-2200. Requests are confidential.

Change in transportation plans? Contact us early

The need to change transportation plans for your child can occur at any moment; and we're here to make sure your child gets safely where he/she needs to go at the end of the school day. Understandably, the office is a busy place at the end of the school day. We need time to get your message to your child's teacher. If you have to change your child's transportation plans, please send a note to school in the morning or call the school office no later than 2:30 p.m.

Stress-free birthday cookies, ice cream

On your child's special day, the school cafeteria can provide freshly-baked cookies or ice cream for a small fee per student. Napkins and a surprise for the birthday child are included in the birthday package. Contact the cafeteria manager at least one week in advance if you'd like to take advantage of this great service.

It's not too late to support the PTA fall fundraiser

The Read-A-Thon was a great new idea that got the students at Franconia excited about reading. While the Read-A-Thon ended last month, the PTA is still accepting donations as we did not quite meet our goal. If you have been meaning to turn in the paperwork for the Read-A-Thon, but thought it was too late, no worries. Just send it in with your child, and we will make sure the PTA gets it.

Thank you for supporting our school so generously!