



KHA Parents Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4

December 2007

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Our Mission:

Kingston Hill Academy is dedicated to providing students with the opportunity for an inclusive, individualized, and challenging curriculum that supports them to reach their full potential.

From the Principal's Desk...

Dear KHA Parents/Guardians:

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We are excited to be making some positive changes to the curriculum at KHA. I would like to give you an update.

First, as a staff we will be implementing a new K-5 spelling program known as *Words Their Way* shortly after the start of the new calendar year. (There is a detailed description of program on page 2.) The program will be implemented in the homeroom, Monday through Thursday before lunch/recess. It is our intent to ensure that all of our kids are receiving consistent and coherent spelling instruction from grade to grade and classroom to classroom. I believe that this research-based program will serve our needs well.

Second, the KHA School Improvement Team is making nice progress in investigating various math curriculums for possible adoption next school year. During our last meeting, the team created a focused list of criteria that we will be using to guide our selection process. For now, we have agreed to investigate two different series— *Everyday Math* and *Saxon Math*. The two series are dramatically different, as one is more conceptually-based and the other is skill-based. We

will be exploring each at our next SIT meeting on **Wednesday, January 9 at 7:00 pm**. I invite all to attend.

Last, I would also like to form a committee of parents and teachers to revise our school's trimester progress report. I believe that we need a report card that is more concise and gives useful information about how our children are learning in all content areas, not merely reading and mathematics. Student progress should also be reported through the lens of the state's standards, known as the Grade Level Expectations (GLE's). Most districts in the state have implemented a "standards-based" report card, and I strongly believe that KHA should do the same. We will start this committee work on **Thursday January 3 at 7:00 pm**. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please send me an e-mail or call me at the school.

Enjoy this special time of year! I wish you and your family a safe, relaxing, and happy holiday season!

Cordially,

Joseph P. Maruszczak
Principal

Words Their Way to begin in all classes

Remember how we were taught to spell when we were students? Many of us were simply handed a list of words and told to write each word five times. We then had our Friday spelling test, after which we may have forgotten those very words. We were also taught some reading and spelling rules such as, "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking." But did you know that this rule, like many others that we were taught, holds true less than fifty percent of the time? Not only do these precepts lack reliability, but the teaching of rules is not really the best way to help our students learn. So what is the best approach?

Since the start of the school year, KHA teachers have been engaged in thoughtful study and deliberation about what approach would be the best to teach our students spelling. We have decided to adopt a program known as *Words Their Way*, a current research-based program which is based upon a time-tested approach known as **word study**.

We learn best by active involvement and practice with the task at hand, which allow us to see word and letter patterns for ourselves. Research suggests that the brain is a *pattern detector*, rather than an *applier of rules*. If our brains are indeed "pattern detectors," then we should provide our students with plenty of opportunity to investigate and organize those patterns.

Fortunately, we are now seeing dramatic and exciting changes in the teaching of spelling and word recognition. The field of word study provides students an opportunity to manipulate



words (and parts of words) in meaningful and enjoyable activities and games. Reading ability can develop dramatically as word study lessons develop experience with:

- Letters and their corresponding sounds.
- Components of words, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes
- Patterns of how words are spelled, such as word families.
- How parts of words often will give hints to the meaning of a word, as well as its spelling or pronunciation.

Words Their Way activities call for *active* problem solving. Students are encouraged to look for spelling patterns, form hypotheses, predict outcomes, and test them. These activities require students to continually ask themselves, "What do I know about this new word, and how is it similar to words that I already know?"

Words Their Way instruction will begin in all home-rooms in January. To learn more about this program, you may visit these websites: http://wps.prenhall.com/chet_bear_words_3/ or <http://literacyconnections.com/WordsTheirWay.php>

Reminder on KHA Pie Fundraiser-

Pick-Up date of the pies (which are frozen) is Tuesday, December 11 between the hours of 2:30 and 4:30 PM.

Thank you for your support of KHA and our science program!

KHA Students Take the GRADE

On November 20 & 21, all KHA students were administered a reading assessment known as the *GRADE*, which is the *Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation*. A comprehensive test that is given in two 45-minute sessions, the test measures a student's vocabulary, specifically, the ability to decode phonetically regular words, to recognize common sight words, and to understand word meaning without the benefit of contextual clues. It also measures comprehension, both the ability to comprehend a sentence as a whole unit as well as multiple sentences in an extended reading passage. The test also has a listening comprehension component that measures students' linguistic understanding without printed cues. Each grade level has its own appropriate version of the *GRADE*. The test is scored using software which provides a diagnostic analysis of each student's strengths and areas of need. It also delineates

each student's grade reading level.

The assessment was given to all students to serve as a screen, to determine if our students were read-

“All... students reading below grade level must receive a Personal Literacy Plan (PLP)”

ing at grade level. Under Rhode Island State Law, all elementary grade students reading below grade level must receive a Personal Literacy Plan (PLP). The PLP is a written document that details the child's specific reading difficulties and spells out what targeted interventions the child's teachers will

make to address those difficulties. The PLP is a succinct plan that also documents on-going reading assessment results and progress monitoring until the student is reading at or above grade level.

Since the *GRADE* is only one assessment, and a snapshot of a student's reading progress, further testing will be done for those students found to be reading below grade level according to the *GRADE*. Other measures such as the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, *Reading Mastery & Horizons* assessments, and running records will also be used to make a valid determination if a PLP is required.

Printed reports with your child's *GRADE* results will be sent out during the week of December 10th. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Maruszczak at the school.

News & Notes From Nurse Judy...

Good news concerning the use of flu mist nasal spray at KHA. It should no longer be a problem for our immune deficient student in kindergarten to be around students who have received the flu mist nasal spray. Thank you to everyone who scheduled their child's flu mist spray around the school schedule or opted for the flu shot instead. Our kindergarten student is doing well and has been remarkably healthy so far this year. School-wide we are also doing extremely well, as our school

attendance rate was 98.1% for the first two months of school. Keep up the good hygiene and health practices!

A few reminders from the health office as we move into cooler weather:

- Please remember to send your child to school with a coat, hat and mittens. The students go outside for PE and recess everyday unless it's raining or the temperature is below 20 degrees.
- don't forget to label all outerwear

with your child's name if you ever want to see it again!

-Be sure your child has a change of colder weather clothes in their lockers for spills, falls and snowy days when they get wet.

-Please keep your child home from school if they are sick with severe colds, fever, vomiting or diarrhea.

-Remember to call the school and let us know when your child is absent.



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**KINGSTON HILL
ACADEMY**

Part of the Groden Network

[www.
kingstonhill.org](http://www.kingstonhill.org)

Attention All Parents with Children in Before or After School Care:

November invoices for Before and After School Care were distributed to students on December 4, 2007 ... payment is due by December 31, 2007. Unpaid invoices for periods prior to November are due immediately; if payment is not received by December 12, 2007, these services will be suspended. If you have any questions about these charges, or if you'd like to set up a payment plan, please contact our Office Manager, Kathy Sheldon @ (401) 783-8282.

Thank You!

Key Dates- December 2007

- 12/7- PTO Holiday Sale, 9:00 am-2:30 pm
- 12/11- Pie Fundraiser pick-up
- 12/12- KHA Advisory Board Meeting,
6:00 pm
- 12/17- PTO Meeting, 7:00 pm
- 12/21- Field Trip to the Museum of Work
and Culture, Woonsocket (Mrs.
Fleming & Mr. Fraza's classes)
- 12/22- 1/1- No School, Holiday Break
- 1/3- KHA Report Card Committee
Meeting, 7:00 pm
- 1/9- School Improvement Team Meeting,
7:00 pm



From every-
one in the
KHA family to
yours...

Happy Holidays!!

