

SEASONAL THOUGHTS



Bird's Eye View

Winter has historically been a time of reflection of drawing inward to practice contemplation. Which, given the unfavorable weather raging outside our ancestors' doors, seemed a cozy alternative!

And in our culture, the winter holidays are also the time most of us choose to recognize our obligations to one another and to future generations. We teach our children, in families and classes, ways to fill in the holes of material needs in our community via organizations such as *Toys for Tots*, *Coats for Kids*, our own *Helping Hands* and local food banks.

Can we push ourselves and our families to explore this issue further? Are there other ways we can have a positive impact on the realities of inequality? It is rare that material needs are the only inequalities which exist in our communities.

How can we implement our thoughts, actions, and personal wealth—not just monetary wealth—to enrich and enliven those around us?

Brainstorm with your families all your personal assets; your strengths and talents. How can these contribute to our communities?

For beginning ideas, I look to all parents comprising our PTA who volunteer their time, talent, and energy to this wonderful Matoaka community, of which I am proud to be a part.

Over this holiday break I will be looking for more ways to extend the life of this concept of interconnectedness and community. I hope you will too.

Happy Holidays!

Loralee Clark
Newsletter Editor

Calendar of Events

December

- 3-7: Matoaka Book Fair
- 5: Book Fair Family Night, 5:30—7:30 PM
Matoaka Merchandise Sale, 5:30—7:30 PM
- 7: Matoaka Merchandise Sale, 3:30—4:15 PM
- 14: Matoaka Merchandise Sale, 3:30—4:15 PM

MATOAKA ELEMENTARY: HOME OF THE CARDINALS

PTA MEMBERSHIP

The November PTA membership drive and contest were a great success! We currently have 433 PTA members. Our yearly goal is 450 members, so it is still not too late to join!

The November contest included prizes for the class and grade with the highest membership. The top class was Mrs. Ferrara's, who will receive \$50 in classroom supplies. The top grade was the 3rd grade. They will win an assembly by the animal/reptile education group ZooPros. Congratulations!

The PTA will be selling **Matoaka merchandise** (shirts, tumbler cups, key chains, hair ribbons, shoe laces, and a few special discontinued items from the years past) just in time for the holidays!

Come check out all of the goodies at the evening Book Fair on Tuesday, Dec. 4th from 5:00-7:00 p.m., as well as Friday, Dec. 7th & Friday, Dec. 14th from 3:30-4:15 p.m.



Mark you calendars for the upcoming Spirit Night at Moe's on Tuesday, January 29th.



RECEPTION FOR THE VETERANS

We had a wonderful reception for the Veterans, serving over 300 people immediately following the 3rd grade performance. The Veterans and their Matoaka families enjoyed patriotic desserts donated by Matoaka families as well as delicious fruit donated by Au Bon Pan. In addition, we served coffee and lemonade. It was a wonderful afternoon and we hope the Veterans felt honored and appreciated.

Treats for the Troops Candy Drive Update



SCA officers collected candy from November 1-9 in donation boxes in the pods. They collected 300 pounds of candy which was delivered to Dr. Springman at New Town Dental Arts on November 14th to be sent to the troops in Iraq and abroad.

Thanks to all those who donated!!!

January Family Fun Night

Come to the Tribe basketball game on Saturday, January 5th. The game is at 2:00 p.m. and kids wearing Matoaka shirts get in free! For adults/\$5 and \$3 for kids who aren't students. More information will be coming home soon.



Matoaka Garden

Mrs. Campbell's and Mrs. Chantry's Kindergarten classes harvested spinach, Swiss chard and radishes from the school garden and then had a chance to eat their salad mix in November.

The Nature Club was also active in the garden this month. They planted tulips, hyacinths, and allium bulbs that will bloom next Spring. They also harvested the bird house gourds which they will be making in to bird houses later this winter.

Radishes from the garden planted & harvested by kindergarteners:

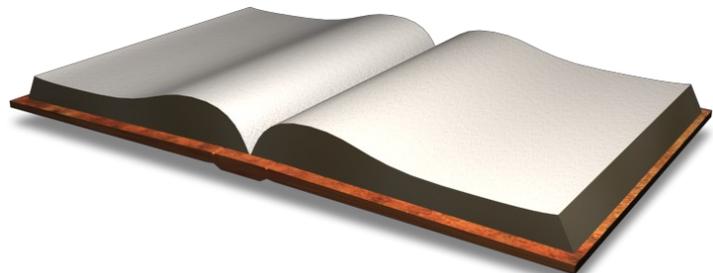


Yearbook Update

Yearbook order forms were sent home with students Thanksgiving week. Additional/replacement forms can be picked up at the office.

Yearbooks are \$22, if orders are received prior to Christmas break. After Christmas, they will be \$25. Books can be ordered until May 1, 2013. Please make your checks out to Matoaka PTA (not Lifetouch).

Submit your photos for consideration in this year's book! Email photos to allison@icequipment.com. Please include the grade/class in the email.



Understanding Grades and Grading

How you react to grades can affect your child's success in school. It's important to know what they represent—and what they don't.

by Emily Graham, www.schoolfamily.com

A lot has changed since the days you carried home handwritten report cards for your parents to sign. Now class websites and teacher emails give parents greater insight into how their kids are doing in the classroom.

Being able to track your child's progress throughout the semester may mean having more frequent conversations about how she's performing, and that's one area where things haven't changed. Parents are often unsure of how to keep their children motivated in school, whether their grades are good or bad. And kids are still fearful of how their parents will react to less-than-stellar marks.

Focus on Learning

You want your child to do his best in school but not to stress out over every assignment. For kids to get this message, it's important for parents to have a realistic attitude about grades.

Younger students in particular may be afraid to face parents when they have disappointing grades, says Tammi Mackeben, a school counselor at the preK-8 Ernesto Serna School in El Paso, Texas. "Let them know that we all fail," she says. "Many times the little ones feel that if they have a failing grade on their report card, or a bad grade, that that's the end of the world."

Instead of expecting your child to ace every test, think of grades as tools that let you, your child, and his teacher know where he's doing well and where he's lagging, says Mackeben, the American School Counselor Association's 2008 counselor of the year.

If a student is falling behind, it's a signal to talk to the teacher. Ask about specific things your child is struggling with and what you can do at home to help. Remember that the goal is for your child to learn, not to earn perfect grades.

Many parents try to motivate their kids to do well in school by rewarding them with money or special privileges for good grades, or by punishing them for disappointing grades. A better way to motivate students is to give them positive reinforcement for having a good attitude and making an effort, says Vivian Friedman, a professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Parents should talk with their kids from a young age about what they want to be when they grow up and help them understand how education will help them reach their goals, Friedman says.

Instead of pressuring your daughter to make good grades so she can get into an Ivy League school, try to impart a love of learning and encourage her to do her best. "The child who feels that his parents have realistic expectations will not be afraid to come home with whatever grades reflect his best effort," Friedman says.

Start a conversation about grades with your child by asking her to tell you about the report card or a particular assignment. Encourage her to talk about where she's doing well and where she's having trouble and to share how she feels about her progress. This approach allows kids to feel confident about how they've grown rather than feeling that they're bad students if they're struggling with a subject.

If your son's grades are poor, avoid jumping to the conclusion that it's because he didn't work hard enough or was lazy. A lot of things could be keeping your child from doing his best in school, Mackeben says. A child may have an undiagnosed learning disability, may be experiencing social problems at school, may not like his teacher, or may just not be very interested in a particular subject.

If your daughter is having a problem understanding the material, contact the teacher or school counselor to talk about how you can help. But if she's capable of doing the work, encourage her to take responsibility for the grade and think about what she could have done differently. Did she procrastinate on an assignment? Could she have reviewed her homework before turning it in?

Don't let your child place blame for a bad grade on the teacher or anyone else. Still, even as you discuss the reasons for the grade, it's important to stay positive and point out the child's strengths, not just in school but also in life, Mackeben says. "We want our kids to be more proud of the progress and the process that they took to get to that grade than the grade in itself."

Understanding Grades

Most of today's parents grew up receiving A's and B's or numeric grades up to 100. So it's only natural that there is some confusion when their children's grades are expressed as plus or minus signs or numbers from 1 to 4.

The trend now is for schools to develop detailed report cards to give parents more information about how kids are doing, which can create information overload, says Thomas Guskey, a professor at Georgetown College in Kentucky and author of *How's My Kid Doing? A Parent's Guide to Grades,*

Marks, and Report Cards.

"Educators have a very special language," he says. The first thing parents should do upon receiving a report card is think about whether they understand what the teacher is trying to communicate, he suggests. If you see any terms you don't understand or if you're confused by the format, ask your child's teacher to explain it.

Guskey recommends asking teachers the following questions: What does this tell me about my child's performance in terms of your expectations? Is she on track for this time of year? Is he ahead or behind?

However your child is doing, Guskey advises, perhaps the most important question you can ask the teacher is "How can I help?"

—Emily Graham is a senior editor for School Family Media. She lives with her family in Oklahoma.

Ha! Ha! Ha!

Knock, knock.
-Who's there?
Cows say.
-Cows say who?
No silly, cows say moo!

Knock, knock.
-Who's there?
Owls say.
-Owls say who?
Yep.

Knock, knock.
-Who's there?
Tank.
-Tank who?
You're welcome!

Q. What do snowmen wear on their heads?

A. Ice caps.

Q. What do Snowmen call their offspring?

A. Chill-dren.

Q. Why is it so cold at Christmas?

A. Because it's in Decembrrrr!



Family Fun Ideas for December

Go out and look at Christmas lights

Bake cookies

Make Salt Dough ornaments

Help to wrap presents for friends and family

Watch a holiday movie together

Check out holiday books at the library

Make popcorn and cranberry garlands

Make paper chains for the Christmas tree

Address and mail holiday cards

Make cards and gifts for teachers

Make cards to bring to a nursing home

Grocery shop for a food bank

Make orange and clove pomanders



An Easy Way To Connect With Kids At Dinnertime

by ALISSA MARQUESS creativewithkids.com

What was your favorite part of the day?

This question has become a touchstone in our family. We ask it at dinner time whether that dinner is at the table or at a hap-hazard gathering in the living room, it is a way to connect and bring people present.

If the adults in the room are just a *wee* bit exhausted and grouchy, it is a way to pull us out of our funk. (How can you stay grouchy when your four year old says his favorite part of the day was when you played a game with him?)

You know, dinner is "supposed to be" this nice connecting point in your day. The truth of the matter is, my husband and I both tend to be run ragged by dinnertime. In fact, frequently he's not even home yet by the time I'm feeding the kids. I am thankful to have discovered this little ritual to help bring connection even on days when I am just WORN out.

At dinner time tonight ask your kids what their favorite part of the day was. Go around to everyone at the table and find out their answer. Even if they had a crummy day, was there some little bright spot? I hope this brings you a new favorite part of your day.

Crafty Kids

I like to encourage homemade gifts, especially between my kids. Here are some ideas for children to make for their siblings, because while WE love those scribbled pictures and abstract sculptures, some siblings may have a difficult time appreciating our budding crafters.



Socks + fabric paint = personalized no slippy socks



Sharpie pen + white ceramic mug = happy hot cocoa mug



Buttons + ribbon + thread = cool wreath ornament

Popsicle sticks + photographs = fun puzzle



Bird's Eye View

Empty glass jars + baby oil + sprinkles + small plastic toys = cool snow globe!
(Make sure the glue on the lid is dry before you flip it over.)



Earth Corner: One Small Change

With the new year approaching, you and your kids could choose one small change that will make a difference!

These ideas come from www.hipmountainmama.com

Recycle

- Compost

Plant a garden

- Get involved in community or school efforts to "go green"

Pick 1 grocery item and switch to organic, local, or home made

- Join a CSA

Purchase recycled paper products

- Stop using paper products by switching to cloth napkins, rags

Having a party? Make it a no waste party

- Reduce your water use

Print double sided

- Drive less

Get outside and enjoy nature

- Hang your laundry to dry

Reduce your use of plastics

- Switch to natural bath care products

Teach your kids about what it means to tread light on our earth

- Carpool

Buy local and properly raised meat

- Go vegetarian or vegan

Switch 1 or more meals a week to vegetarian

- Turn off your lights more often

Use the sun to heat your home when possible

- Plant a tree

Hang some plants in your home

- Use natural lawn care

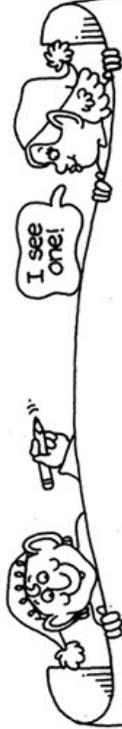
Use home made or natural cleaning supplies



Holiday Hunt

Below are some words that we often hear at Christmastime. See if you can find and circle them all in this letter grid. Look carefully—they are hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards.

- | | | | |
|--------|------------|----------|--------|
| snow | cookies | bows | Santa |
| carols | North Pole | reindeer | sleigh |
| bells | mistletoe | stocking | tree |
| elf | ornament | present | holly |



A	B	P	R	E	S	N	T	H	S	W	Q	H	J	N
M	S	I	P	T	Z	U	E	L	E	O	S	R	R	O
S	I	N	D	E	J	E	C	S	P	N	T	E	L	O
P	R	E	K	Z	A	M	S	K	O	M	I	Q	I	X
R	O	R	B	J	A	R	G	O	M	K	I	E	S	I
E	S	L	O	H	N	X	C	A	S	E	L	E	N	G
N	Q	H	S	Y	K	R	L	O	E	Y	G	Y	T	J
T	H	A	O	D	R	L	B	L	I	S	D	J	O	Y
S	W	Z	L	T	B	L	I	S	D	J	O	Y	X	M
W	Q	P	E	M	G	H	H	P	O	L	E	N	S	Z
H	S	R	P	T	L	F	S	H	I	S	O	L	E	N
N	O	R	T	H	P	O	L	E	N	S	Z	M	B	Y

