
WOLFTRAP

A THOUGHT-FULL SCHOOL

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

January 3, 2012

1903 Beulah Road, Vienna VA 22182
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Dates to Remember

Jan. 3	First day back after winter break	Feb. 13	Beginner Band & Strings Rehearsal, 9 AM
Jan. 6	Talent Show, Madison HS, 7 PM	Feb. 14	PTA Meeting, 9 AM
Jan. 10	PTA Meeting, Library, 7 PM	Feb. 15	Beginner Band & Strings Concert, 7 PM
Jan. 13	AAP Coffee, Cafeteria, 9 AM	Feb. 20	President's Day Holiday - School Closed
Jan. 16	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday	Feb. 24	Spirit Day - Sport Jersey Day
Jan. 27	School Spirit Day - Crazy Hair 2nd Grading Period Ends	Feb. 25	Wolftrap Skate Night, 6 - 8 PM
Jan. 30 & 31	Student Holidays	Feb. 29	Cultural Arts Assembly, Franklin Institute, 9AM

Anyone needing accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in these Wolftrap School activities should contact the school at 703-319-7300. Requests need to be made seven working days prior to the scheduled activity.

Dear Families,

During this winter break, I heard a dear friend of mine use this phrase several times, "Well, I guess this is the new normal." I had not heard this before...."the new normal," so I asked her what she meant. For her, this meant that life was now very different than it had been for the past 25 years. She and her husband had recently transitioned from their large family home to an adult retirement community in a new area. She was no longer hosting the family holiday celebrations nor having the ever-growing family over for Sunday dinner each week. Each time she uttered this phrase I began to think of how many times each of us is asked to consider "the new normal" and how we react when this happens.

For my friend there were really only two choices; probably the same choices that most of us would experience. First, you could face change with a positive attitude and begin to look at what is good about your new situation. For my friend it meant no stairs to climb or yard work to do. Now she had time to do more quilting which she had become very interested in during the past few years. As she shared her story I realized she experienced many other positive changes as well.

The second approach to "the new normal" could be a negative adaptation. Permitting worry, anxiety and at times, bitterness fill your time results in a detrimental adjustment to the new change. If this had been my friend's approach she never would have met the quilting group in her new neighborhood nor experienced a renewed energy for pursuing this creative outlet with the time she now had. While she misses the frequency of family gatherings, now monthly rather than weekly, she enjoys bringing her quilt projects to share with her family. Her family loves receiving these treasured handmade gifts. They are so proud of their mom's newly discovered talent.

As we begin a new year, what will be "the new normal" for each of us and how will we face these changes in our lives? I hope each of us will focus on the positive and what we can do to embrace a "new normal" rather than become captive by one of the sayings below.

Sincerely,



Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.

Dr. Anita Blain, Principal

Worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling round a center of fear.





An Interview with Lucy Calkins

By Marni Matyac, Reading Teacher

This school year, the staff of Wolfrap Elementary School has been reading professional books by Lucy Calkins, a pioneer in the teaching of reading and writing in elementary schools. Over the years, she has had many great things to share with parents about reading and writing education. I would like to share some of her thoughts with you.

Over the past several years, there has been increased interest in literacy education. Today's world requires a higher level of literacy skills and schools have been asked to meet the challenge. Some schools have chosen scripted programs, but studies show that well trained teachers make a huge difference when it comes to literacy education. Many school systems, including Fairfax County Public Schools, are focusing professional development in reading and writing as a way to keep their faculties up to date on the latest teaching techniques and research.

One of the biggest debates has been between teaching phonics vs. teaching for meaning (sometimes called "balanced literacy."). Calkins comments on this ongoing debate: "Classroom teachers have always known that we need phonics and we need comprehension. We need to put the best of children's literature in the hands of kids, and we also need to teach them the strategies of phonics." She cautions against a strictly phonics based approach to reading. "We want (children) to reach for books and carry books with them and value books. That doesn't happen when you only teach phonics...Phonics is important. But standardized tests are more and more challenging. Kids can't excel in them if all they get is phonics. They need to be able to do a lot of high-level literacy."

She encourages parents to give children the chance to come to reading in their own time. She feels that children should be exposed to both fiction and non-fiction. Both genres allow children to "develop different muscles." Fiction allow children to practice envisioning stories in their mind, while non-fiction helps children add to their already growing knowledge base. She acknowledges that girls often choose to read fiction and boys choose to read non-fiction. "If that's going to be your son's ramp into reading, give it to them," Calkins says. She says that in order to develop a love of reading in boys, parents need to "read to boys... (Parents) need to read in front of their boys and to their boys. And they've got to find books boys love."

In this article, Calkins addresses a question that we often get as reading teachers: What if my child wants to read all 108 books in a series? Calkins states that children love these books because they provide a lot of support to a reader. Knowledge of characters, setting, etc. makes it easier to read. Calkins states, "You can build habits of a discerning reader with series books, notice a brand new character or predict what will happen based on the knowledge of a character's personality." Reading books in a series creates a reading culture among children. Children will often trade books and discuss the books with each other. "Series books can develop a lot of habits of good reading," says Calkins.

As parents and educators, we need to keep in mind the goal we have for each one of our children. We want to develop life-long readers. "Kids need to understand what literacy is for," says Calkins. "The most important thing is to help them fall in love with books."

Happy Reading!



Reminder Box



It's Cold Outside! - The school policy is to hold outdoor recess if the temperature is at least 32 degrees. Please send your child to school with the appropriate clothing to keep them warm so they can enjoy their outdoor time.

Illness ?? - If your child will be missing school because they are sick please remember to call the attendance line (703) 319-7373 and leave information as to the symptoms and nature of the illness.

Money Sent to School - If you are sending money (either cash or check) into school please make sure it is clearly labeled with **your child's name, teacher and purpose**. This will ensure that the money is directed to the appropriate individuals.