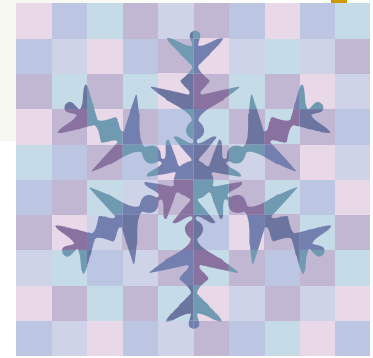


M E T E O R N E W S

DECEMBER 2011



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SNOW'S GONNA FLY SOON 2

THE VALUE OF "NO" 2

POLICIES YOU SHOULD KNOW 3

ZITS COMICS 4

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE 4

ENDING THE YEAR... SORT OF

December is always one of the shortest months of the school calendar and it is usually packed with all sorts of activities. As we close out the calendar year, we have to remind students that we have yet to hit our half-way mark.

In high schools or unit school districts, the school calendar is normally devised to end the first semester before letting the students leave for their winter holiday. The purpose of this is to allow students to take their semester final exams while the information is fresh in their minds. It also provides a much cleaner break for them in their two semester schedule. This is why high school and unit districts often start school earlier in August. Starting earlier allows them to get their required number of days for a semester (usually around 90) prior to winter break.

For elementary districts, such as ours, it is not as imperative that we end our marking period before break. Most of our students do not take exams at the end of the semester, so we tend to start school a little later in August and end our semester in the middle of January to balance things out.

THE COMMON CORE

For over a decade, we have based our curriculum on the Illinois Standards for Learning. We take ISAT tests every spring to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This test is based on the Illinois Learning Standards.

The federal government was supposed to either re-write or re-authorize NCLB in 2007 but has still failed to do so. During this time, educators have not been idle. While Congress contemplates what to do, educational leaders

Fortunately for us, our students respond well academically to this calendar and I would argue that both are appropriate for their age groups. All we have to do is remind students that December 21st is not the end of the nine weeks and that we have a few weeks in January to work on their second quarter grades.

Getting back to December, I would ask that while there are so many distractions in December, we all work to stay focused on our academic progress. Even though the snow may begin to fall and holidays are in the air, school is still in session. Homework still needs to be completed. Teachers are going to assign projects and reading assignments. There will still be tests and quizzes and all of the school rules will still be enforced.

I hope that all of us can enjoy this short enjoyable month and stay focused on the task of academic success.

Mr. Rolinitis—Principal

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Intramural Volleyball sign-ups are going on now. The deadline for sign-ups is January 13, 2012.**
- **The District will be closed on the following dates: 12/23, 12/26, 12/30 (closes at noon), and 1/2/12. There will be no one in any of the school district offices to answer the phones or respond to messages.**
- **There will be early dismissal at 1:10 PM on Wednesday, December 21st. Please make the appropriate arrangements.**

have developed new standards called "**The Common Core.**" These new standards are based on the idea that we need to focus on the "**core**" of what students need to learn. Our students need to have fundamental in-depth knowledge of these concepts so they can be prepared for college and for life. I will share more about the Common Core standards in subsequent newsletters. If you are interested in finding out more, you can go to the Common Core web site: www.corestandards.org for full descriptions.

THE SNOW IS GONG TO FLY SOON!

As I am writing this article, the forecast is for snow this afternoon. It usually only takes a few flakes to begin flying before the students start asking if we are going to get out early or if we are going to have school tomorrow.

First, it is very rare that we send home students once we have them here. It is clearly a safety issue. Although we use several methods to contact families, we are not certain that there will be someone at the home if we drop students off early. The last thing we want to do is leave an elementary school student out in the cold.

Snow days are also fairly rare. If it is unsafe for travel, the District Office may cancel



school. As much as students and parents may think so, the school principal cannot call a snow day. Honestly, I don't want to have snow days anyway, because they make us go to school longer in the spring.

Should we need to either call off early, or cancel school, the District Office will send out a Connect Ed message to all parents and families. It is very important that you have the correct phone numbers and email addresses in our student management system, STI. If your number has changed or if you have not been receiving our Connect Ed messages, it is probably because you have not updated your numbers.

We will also post school closing announcements on our district web site, www.mokena159.org, and it will be announced on the local television and radio stations.

It is important that you talk to your junior high aged student about your family plan if he school district releases early. Your plan should include who is going to pick the child up (if they are not a bus rider) and what they are to do if there is no one home when they get there.



Be Prepared— The best time to get ready for an emergency is before it happens. I tell my staff in November to get their vehicles ready for winter. Put an ice scraper, a blanket and other emergency items in your car now, before the snow flies. Make sure to have plenty of gas in your tank and a full charge on your mobile phone. Make sure your tires and battery are in good shape for the cold and snow. If you don't know how to do this yourself, service stations often give discounts for winter check ups and service.

It is always better to have your vehicle prepared and to have these things in your car and not need them, than to need them and not have them.

THE VALUE OF “NO”

Parents all remember that one of the first words that our children learn after Ma Ma and Da Da is the word “NO.” Our children asserted their independence by telling us what they were not going to do, but didn't really want to hear it when we used the word back to them.

As our children grew to junior high aged students, they still like to tell us NO, don't like to hearing it from us. The problem is that there are some who don't hear it from parents often enough.

There is value to telling a child NO when it is not in their best interest to say yes. In an effort to keep peace in the house, it is often easier to say yes to

your child even when what they are asking for may be unreasonable or unnecessary.

I have seen it happen time and time again where a parent comes to me perplexed and says, “*I don't know when I lost control of my kid.*” I often ask them how often they tell their child no. They tend respond with stunned silence.

It is every parent's dream to be able to give our children whatever they want and need. I would submit that it is better to make sure that our children get *everything* they *need* and only some of what they want. The trick is to be able to know the difference.

When children are given

everything they want, they tend not to appreciate it. They don't understand what is going on when the outside world hits them in the forehead with a board marked with a big red NO.

In life, we hear NO all of the time. Not everyone wins and not everyone gets everything they want when they want it. Learning the value of NO is a vital parenting lesson that each of us needs to impart to our children. Learning that NO often means, “*not right now*” or “*not until you earn it*” is an even more important lesson to teach your children.

I read of a study where the researchers followed a group of children

THE VALUE OF “NO” CONTINUED

from elementary school through college. During that time they gave them a simple test with M&M’s. They put a couple of M&M’s on the table in front of them and showed them a large package of M&M’s that they took away. They told the children that they could eat the M&M’s in front of them or sit there and not eat them for just a few minutes and they would get both the ones on the table and the whole bag.

They repeated this exercise several times as the children grew into adults. What they consistently found was the students who ate the small amount of candy and couldn’t wait for the few minutes tended to be dramatically less successful in school and in life than those who could delay their gratification. Those who could say “NO, not right now,” got in less trouble and

had better grades than their impatient counterparts.

Teaching our children that some of the time NO is good for them is a very hard lesson. It is even harder if you have never done it before. It is a lesson that will help them understand that life is not always as easy as asking a parent and that there are times when NO means absolutely NO; Sometimes NO means “I’ll have to work for it;” and sometimes NO means “I’ll just have to wait.”

Learning this lesson from either the parenting side or the child’s can mean the difference between a successful adult and one who can’t maintain a job and wants to live in your attic for the rest of his life playing Modern Warfare 16.

POLICIES YOU SHOULD KNOW...

Each Month, we select a couple of the rules and policies that are in affect at MJHS so parents can better understand what is in the Parent/Student handbook. If you would like to review the handbook it is located on the District 159 web site home page.

Lost-and-Found (HB page 27) - It is amazing how many things students can lose during a year. We literally collect piles of clothes, shoes, purses, glasses, and various other items on a daily basis. Valuable and semi-valuable items such as purses, wallets and electronic devices are held in the office until we can determine an owner. All other items are placed on a table in the Commons for students to claim. At the end of each quarter, we gather unclaimed items and donate them to a local charity.

It is often frustrating to know that students lose expensive clothing and other costly items and never come looking for them in the lost-and-found. We recently had a bike in our possession for three months, and it is not uncommon for us to donate brand name jackets and coats from “North Face, Eddie Bauer, and Columbia” to Good Will because students just don’t look at the Lost-and-Found

table.

We recommend that you mark the tags of your children’s more expensive items so we can return them or you can identify them quickly. Last, Remind your child to check out the table or talk to us in the office if they have lost something. It just might be sitting there waiting to be claimed.

Social Activities (HB Page 32-33) - Throughout the year we have several social activities for the students to attend. Some are during the school day while others occur after school. The first and most important thing to remember that even though the activity may be outside of the classroom, all school rules still apply (unless the administration and sponsors say differently)

Other guidelines:

1. Arrive no earlier than 10 or 15 minutes before an event and make arrangements to be picked up **at** the conclusion of the activity.
2. Students are not allowed to leave the activity early unless it is arranged with the sponsors and a parent picks them up.

15 THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR CHILD IN DECEMBER

1. Snowball fight*
2. Play Monopoly/board game—the actual board game, not the video version
3. Holiday Lights—Make some hot chocolate and drink it while you drive around looking at holiday decorations
4. Go out to dinner at a restaurant of your child’s choice and commit to no electronic devices during the meal
5. Go sledding*
6. Read the Same Book and then talk about it as a family
7. Volunteer at a shelter or help serve food to the homeless
8. Send a Care Package to Troops stationed overseas. www.momscookies.org
9. Build a snowman*
10. Do one choice activity for each member of your family—no one can opt out!
11. Movie night—pop popcorn, crack the two-liter and watch one movie for the parents, one movie for the kids
12. Do something nice for someone who will never know and will never be able to thank you
13. Make a big breakfast and stay in your PJ’s all morning watching TV.

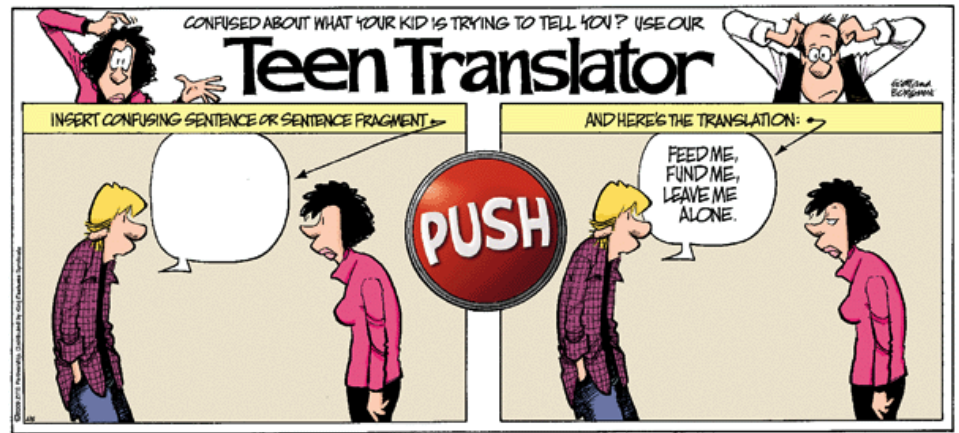
*=This one only works if there is snow!

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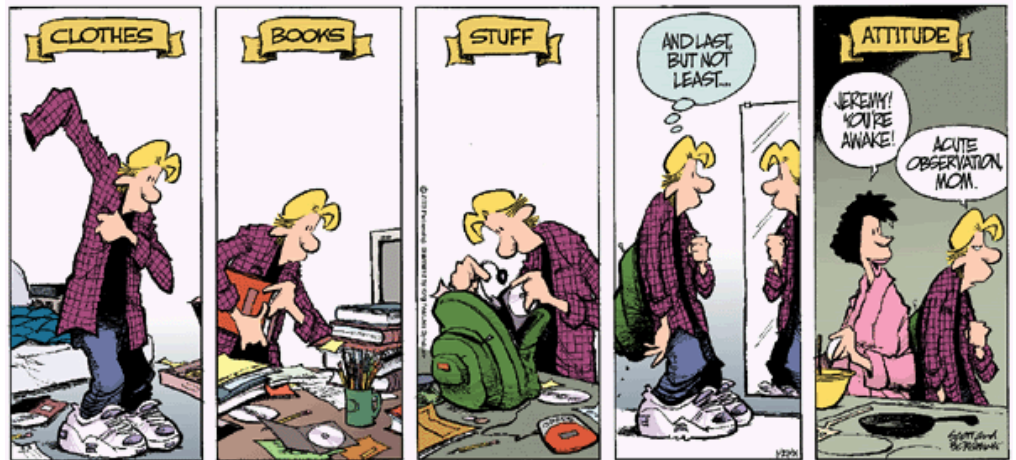
ZITS

BY JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN



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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

When I get to this portion of the newsletter, I always have so many messages that I want to share that it is difficult for me to narrow it down to just one concise topic. Being a parent of a junior high aged child is very complicated and I want to share with you all of the things that I have learned over my years as a junior high principal that will help you navigate these treacherous waters as safely as possible.

Maybe the best message that I can share with you this month is that being a junior high family means multi-tasking at its finest. Being a junior high student it is a circus of juggling homework for six or seven subjects and remembering which teachers wants us to number the questions inside the margin and which ones want them on the outside; which want the assignment typed and which prefer them hand written, in ink or pencil; which class has a test on Monday

and whether their partner in science is bringing the poster board or the markers... not to mention after school and family activities. It almost becomes completely overwhelming for the children and the parents.

In the next few weeks, it may seem like there is a clown out there throwing three or four more balls in the air for you to juggle and you know that your children are feeling the same way.

Be sure to find ways to remove some of those tasks as the month goes on. Hopefully during the winter break, you will have time to stop juggling and just have fun together. Slow down. Turn off your phones, iPads, and computers for a while and just enjoy being parents. Help your children just enjoy being siblings and let go of all of the



stress that comes with life.

I have found that when families carve out time to just **be** together; **talk** together; and **play** together, they are much more connected and are able to handle stressful times easily when they come around. If you are reading this and you are saying to yourself, "I just don't have the time." You and your family are probably in need of this advice the most.

Enjoy your December— Mr. Rolinitis