

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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Receive the PWS Update electronically! You can receive the *PWS Update* electronically via e-mail. If you wish to be among the first to receive the latest editions of our school newsletters by having it sent to your e-mail address simply e-mail your request to Mr. Carter at dcarter@hrce.ca. The *PWS Update* is published **approximately every two weeks**.

School Closed for the Holidays: The last day of school before we close for Christmas vacation is **Friday, December 20**. We will be closed for two full weeks. Students return to school on **Monday, January 6, at 8:25 AM**.

Keep Your Head Warm: Limited edition "Park West School" wool toques (in our school colours) are now for sale. They are \$10.00 each. They fit adults and children. Purchase them from our school office (cash or cheque) **while supplies last**. They make great gifts for any occasion.

Happy Kwanzaa: Kwanzaa is an African American holiday. It was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga with the hope of educating his people about the African-American struggles and their rich cultural heritage. The holiday lasts for seven days beginning on **December 26**. It binds the African harvest customs and the social history of African North Americans. The word Kwanzaa is derived from the East African Swahili phrase "Mantunde ya kwanza" which means "the first fruits." The second "a" was added to give the word seven letters which corresponds to the seven symbols, the seven principles and the seven days of Kwanzaa. Each day Kwanzaa concentrates on one of these principles: unity (Dec. 26); self determination (Dec. 27); collective work and responsibility (Dec. 28); cooperative economics (Dec. 29); purpose (Dec. 30); creativity (Dec. 31); and faith (Jan. 1). The celebration is organized around five fundamental activities: ingathering of the people, a special reverence for the Creator and creations, commemoration of the past, re-commitment to one's highest ideals, and celebration of the good around and within each other. Happy Kwanzaa to all those in the Park West community who will be celebrating this special holiday.

HAPPY HANUKKAH: Many families in our Park West community soon will be celebrating Hanukkah. Hanukkah begins at sundown on **Sunday, December 20**. Hanukkah, translated as "dedication", is an eight-day celebration in the Jewish community which begins on the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev (November/December). It recalls an event which took place in 165 BC (in the Gregorian calendar) when the Maccabees triumphed over the Greek forces of Antiochus IV. The celebration is also known as the Festival of Lights. When the Jews entered the temple they found only enough oil to light the lamps to last one day; but the oil miraculously continued burning for eight days! To celebrate each family lights an eight-candle holder called a menorah. One candle is lighted on each of the eight days. Traditional foods include potato pancakes (called latkes) and children play a game with a dreidel (four-sided top). (taken from *Celebrate!* by Clary Croft).

Celebrating Hanukkah at Park West:

- Hanukkah themed books are on display (and available to borrow) in our school library.
- Our school Menorah is prominently displayed in the display case in our main lobby. It was made in Israel out of pewter.
- Hanukkah decorations are on display in our school.
- On Thursday, December 19, those PWS students celebrating Hanukkah will be invited to gather in the library for a celebration. Mr. Carter will read aloud the story "*The Mensch on a Bench*", and Ms. Comeau (our librarian) will light the candles on our school Menorah, with assistance from students. Park West now has its very own "Mensch". He's on display in our main lobby display case.

Merry Christmas: Christmas is an annual commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a widely observed holiday, celebrated generally on **December 25**, by billions of people around the world. Christmas Day is a civil holiday in many of the world's nations. It is celebrated as a major festival in countries around the world, including many whose populations are mostly non-Christian. Among countries with a strong Christian tradition, a variety of Christmas celebrations have developed that incorporate regional and local cultures. Popular modern customs of the holiday include gift giving, Christmas music and caroling, an exchange of Christmas cards, church celebrations, visiting with family and friends, a special meal, food and treats, and the display of various Christmas decorations, including Christmas trees, Christmas lights, nativity scenes, garlands, wreaths, mistletoe, and holly. In addition, several closely related and often interchangeable figures, known as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, and Christkind are associated with bringing gifts to children during the Christmas season and have their own body of traditions and lore. (Source: Wikipedia)

A Park West Christmas:

- Our school is adorned with Christmas decorations and student artwork. Come see our 10 foot school Christmas tree in our main lobby. It's decorated with 900 lights and 100's of beautiful ornaments handmade by our students.

- Many students and their classes have been reading Christmas themed stories, creating festive art projects, and learning about the customs and traditions of Christmas.
- “*Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays*”: Here at Park West School we are not timid about acknowledging and celebrating Christmas and wishing others “*Merry Christmas*”. Christmas can be celebrated by anyone....both those belonging to the Christian faith, and those who are non-Christians. However, we are sensitive to the fact that some students, and their families, do not celebrate Christmas, or share the Christian beliefs of Christmas. That doesn’t mean we all can’t celebrate together in our very diverse and accepting environment. We are an inclusive school and encourage all to respect and celebrate holidays and special occasions together.
- It’s ***Pyjama Day*** (for staff and students) on **Wednesday, December 18**, at Park West. Everyone is encouraged to wear PJ’s, onesies, PJ pants, bathrobes, slippers, etc. to school that day.
- **Friday, December 20th**, has been declared ***Red and Green Day*** here at Park West School. Students, staff and visitors to our school are invited to wear red and green clothing to celebrate the season...or anything festive, including sweaters, socks, t-shirts, hats, reindeer antlers, Santa hats, jewelry, etc.

We’re Scent-Aware! Did you know that perfume is made of toxic chemicals that can be detrimental to your health? Many of the chemicals in perfume are the same chemicals in cigarette smoke, and yet there is no regulation of the fragrance industry. Most perfume is not made from flowers, but from chemicals. More than 4000 chemicals are used in fragrances. Of these 95% are made from petroleum. Many of us are bothered by perfumes; causing headaches, sinus problems, and even provoking asthma. Other affects may include exhaustion, weakness, dizziness, difficulty concentrating, rashes, muscle ache, nausea, and stomach cramps. Many of us get sick from wearing or being exposed to it. The result here at school is that learning and health are affected. Park West School is a scent-aware environment. **Parents and students: please do not wear perfumes, colognes, and heavily scented products to school.**

Updated Information: Have you moved and have a new address? Changed jobs? New cell or phone number? Please let us know so we can update our records. It’s important we always have the most up to date contact information. Contact Ms. Johnston or Ms. Landers in our school office (902-457-7800).

Lost & Found: Are you missing something from your life? Our school’s Lost & Found station is overflowing. You might find it there. Come check it out in our main lobby. Any remaining items **after December 20** will be discarded or donated to charity.

Are You Prepared? Harsh winter weather is sure to be on its way soon. The Halifax Regional Centre for Education encourages parents and guardians to use their own discretion when it comes to sending their children to school on stormy days. Students who are unable to attend school due to the weather and/or bus cancellations will not be penalized if assignments are given that day. The weather in Nova Scotia can be unpredictable. HRCE encourages parents and guardians to have a plan in place in the event that school is cancelled for the day, or there is a delayed opening, or schools are closed early (and students are dismissed early). That includes making sure your child knows where to go if school is closed early, ensuring children are dressed properly for the weather conditions, and having a back-up plan in place for childcare if schools are closed or delayed in opening.

A Canadian Winter: The Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) does not have an official policy on wind chill/cold weather with regards to students being sent outside for recess and lunch breaks, or whether or not students are kept outside in the morning prior to the first bell. However, schools are provided with information to assist them in making decisions at individual school sites. Generally speaking, when the temperature reaches -100 C or below we assess the appropriateness of sending children outside. We also consider wind chill factors. Wind chill is the cooling sensation caused by the combined effect of temperature and wind. Environment Canada advises there is an “increased risk” of frostbite and hypothermia with a wind chill below – 270 C. School administration consults the Environment Canada weather website frequently and uses common sense in determining whether or not students should be outside on a given day. We also consider the length of time students will be outside, their activity level (heat generation), and exposure to wind and sun (the sun does have a warming affect, even during the winter months). Whenever possible we do like to see our students being given the opportunity to get outside at some point during the day to get some exercise, fresh air, and have the opportunity to socialize with friends, rather than being confined to their classrooms for extended periods of time. Student safety, health, and well-being are always paramount. **Parents should ensure their children are sent to school dressed appropriately for the weather and possible outdoor play.**

Dates to Remember:

| December | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 18 | PJ Day at PWS – wear your pyjamas to school today | |
| 20 | “Red & Green” Day at PWS – wear red & green and festive clothes and accessories to school today | |
| 20 | Last day of school before | |

Mr. Carter, Ms. Olsen, Mr. Melanson, and the entire staff of Park West School wish you and your family a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy New Year, and all the best of the holiday season.

