

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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Principal: Mr. D. Carter Vice Principals: Mr. B. Melanson and Ms. D. Olsen

December 14, 2020

School Closed for the Holidays: The Nova Scotia Government just announced new dates for school closure for Christmas vacation. The last day of school before we close for Christmas vacation is now **Friday, December 18**. We will be closed to students for three full weeks. Schools re-open and students return on **Monday, January 11 at 8:25 am**. Teachers and support staff will be working in schools on planning and professional development (PD) January 4 - 8.

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 are now celebrating Hanukkah. Hanukkah began at sundown on **December 10**. 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). We have some Hanukkah decorations (including "The Mensch on a Bench") on display in our main lobby. *Happy Hanukkah* to all those in our Park West family who are celebrating this week.

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) *Merry Christmas* to everyone in our community celebrating this special occasion.

"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, inclusive, and accepting school community. We are an inclusive school and encourage all to respect and celebrate holidays and special occasions *together*.

Park West Christmas / Holiday (Hanukkah and Kwanzaa) Celebration Week! It's the countdown to Christmas break. Let's celebrate with a week of super fun days! We encourage all students and staff to participate.

- **December 14th > Flannel party**

Wear anything and everything you own that is flannel/plaid!

- **December 15th > Christmas holiday sweater day**

Wear your ugliest or prettiest Christmas holiday sweater/shirt! Don't forget those festive masks!

- **December 16th > Holiday Headwear**

Wear any holiday inspired headwear you have! Don't forget your festive masks!

- **December 17th > Sparkle City / Red/Green/White Day**

Wear all your sparkly stuff and/or the colours red/green/white Don't forget those sparkly/festive masks!

- **December 18th > PJ day**

Rock your comfiest jammies to school.

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.**

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.

Published Author at PWS: Paula Esonwune, a grade 6 student here at PWS, is a published author! Her book *Dark Out* is published by Tellwell Talent, based in Victoria, BC. It is available online from multiple bookstores, including: Barnes and Noble, Amazon Canada and Amazon US, Indigo/Chapters, Bookshop, Book Depository and many more. The book is available both in paperback and Hardcover. Efforts are underway to place Paula's book in public libraries across NS. We are proud of Paula and this amazing accomplishment. Congratulations!

We're Asking Our Students: This week students in grades 4-12 in HRCE will be participating in a short survey that asks them about their *relationships at school and their feeling of belonging at school*. This will allow us as a school and region to better serve the needs of all learners. The survey consists of less than 10 questions, and will be completed at school.

From the School Counselling Office:

- The **EECD Homework Hub** is a valuable mathematics resource for students in **grades 7 to 12**. Students have access to live tutors **Sunday through Thursday, from 5:30 to 9:30 pm**. These tutors are certified teachers, who tutor mathematics courses in both English and French. In addition to tutoring, students can access electronic textbooks, tutorial videos and practice problems. If you are interested, feel free to watch the following EECD video introduction to homework hub: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnORoA5E7i4>
- The following **programs** are available to assist families with social, emotional or behavioural supports. These programs are for youth aged 3-17:
 1. **Strongest Families Program** (<https://strongestfamilies.com/ourprograms/>) - Parents/guardians can access this through IWK Central Referral.
 2. **Incredible Years** - community based program / self-referral through doctor.
 3. **Zones of Regulation Program** – children learn how to self-regulate their emotions. Parents/guardians can access this through IWK Central Referral. IWK Central Referral is 902-464-4110
 4. **Family SOS** (<https://www.familysos.ca/programs>) – self-referral / see website.
- **Grade 9 Course Selection Dates:**
 - December 1st -4th > Mr. Cobean will visit each Grade 9 class to present information to students regarding their course selection options for Grade 10. It is **IMPORTANT** that all students know how to login to their PowerSchool. They will need PowerSchool to register for Grade 10. Please contact the main office or school counselor for login information.
 - Dec. 15 > Virtual Course Selection Information Presentation for Parents / Guardians by Halifax West Counselors. The presentation will be made available to parents via the **Halifax West website**.
 - Dec. 15 > International Baccalaureate Coordinator Presentation (IB) - International Baccalaureate Coordinator will provide information about the grade 10 pre-IB program. This presentation will be made available to parents / guardians via the **Halifax West website**.
 - Dec. 15 > The Options and Opportunities (O2) Coordinator will provide information to our grade 9 students about the grade 10 O2 program. This presentation will be made available to parents / guardians on the **Halifax West website**. Parents are encouraged to Google "*Options and Opportunities Nova Scotia*" if they are interested in seeing what this program has to offer.

Mr. T. Cobean, School Counselor Grades 5-9 : tcobean@hrce.ca

Ms. H. Cusack, School Counselor Grades P-4 : Hannah.Cusack@hrce.ca

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 Kwanza, Happy New Year, and all the best of the holiday season.