

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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School Closed for the Holidays: The last day of school before we close for Christmas vacation is **Thursday, December 21**. Students return to school on **Wednesday, January 3, at 8:25 AM**.

Something to Think About: “Don’t become preoccupied with your child’s academic ability, but instead teach them to sit with those sitting alone. Teach them to be kind. Teach them to offer help. Teach them to be a friend to the lonely. Teach them to encourage others. Teach them to think about other people. Teach them to share. Teach them to look for the good. This is how they will change the world.”

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**.

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 celebrating Hanukkah this week. Hanukkah started at sundown on Tuesday, December 12. 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 main lobby display case, in our library, and throughout our school.
- On Wednesday, December 13, those PWS students celebrating Hanukkah were invited to gather in the library for a celebration. Mr. Carter read aloud the story “The Mensch on a Bench”, and Ms. Comeau (our librarian) lit the candles on our school Menorah. 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:

- “Songs of Joy” Christmas concerts were presented earlier this week by our grades primary to three classes. They were hugely successful, and enjoyed by many family members and friends. Our students worked hard to prepare, under the

direction of our music teachers (Ms. Kerr and Ms. Moen). We're proud of our students, and appreciative of our music teachers, and many other staff for their support.

- 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.
- It's **Pyjama Day** (for staff and students) on **Monday, December 18**, at Park West. Everyone is encourage to wear PJ's to school that day.
- The Halifax West High School music dept. will be here at PWS on **Tuesday, December 19 @ 12:45 – 1:30 PM**, to present a concert to our students (grades P – 9). The concert will feature their concert band, jazz band, and choir.
- On **Wednesday, December 20**, students in grades 4 – 9 are going to the movies at the Scotiabank Cineplex Theatre in Bayers Lake. More information and permission forms will be sent home with students soon. There will be no charge to students for the movie. Admission for all participating students is being paid for using funds the from Student Support Grant (provided by the Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development).
- **Thursday, December 21st**, 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. Anyone with reindeer antlers, Santa hats, etc. are encouraged to wear them to school that day.

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.**

Not Feeling Well? This is the time of year when many children (and adults) get sick. If your child is sick, for the comfort and good health of him/her and everyone here at school, you should keep him/her home for the day. If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious condition (egs. lice, chicken pox, scarlet fever, strep, etc.) please notify the school immediately. Teachers are increasingly being asked by parents to keep children indoors at recess and lunchtime because of illness. We do not make a practice of keeping students indoors due to illness. Children benefit from getting outside during a long day at school for much needed fresh air, play, exercise, socialization, and a change of scenery. If your child is too sick to go outside then he/she should be kept at home until well.

Are You Prepared? Harsh winter weather is sure to be on its way soon. The Halifax Regional School Board 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. HRSB 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.

Dates to Remember:

December		
18	Pyjama Day	
19	Halifax West High School music dept. concert at PWS	12:45 pm
20	Movies at Scotiabank Theatre (for grades 4 – 9)	
21	Red & Green Day	
21	Last day of school before Christmas vacation	
January		
3	Back to school. Be on time. School starts at 8:25 AM	
9	Grade 9 Orientation at Halifax West High School	
17	SAC meeting / PTA meeting	6:00 PM / 7:00 PM
19	PTA Popcorn Day (\$1 a bag)	
29	Grade 9 Trip payment #3 due (\$210.00)	

Mr. Carter, Ms. Masih, 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.

