

The Polaris Post

Serving the Families of Ebert Elementary School

Volume 9, Issue 2

October 16, 2008

Dates to Remember

Monday, October 27
PTO meeting, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, October 28
Halloween Party

Wednesday, October 29 –
Friday, October 31
Fall Break

Monday, November 10
No school

Monday, November 24
PTO meeting, 6:00pm

Wednesday, November 26
– Friday, November 28
Thanksgiving holiday,
no school

Dear Polaris Families,

As we complete our 9th week of this school year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the integrated teaching and learning that happens at Polaris every day. Our unique curriculum is designed to support many important educational goals. Students in each grade at Polaris participate in learning activities designed to model and nurture increasingly complex levels of thinking. Our faculty, well-versed in our integrated-arts curriculum, has long recognized that true learning involves more than the simple recall of specific information.

There are **six** recognized levels of intellectual behavior important to learning. Our teachers and curriculum honor each of these six levels every day. This letter will describe those behavior levels and how they are part of the everyday learning and teaching experience at our special school.

The ability to think (or learn) can be broken into six general categories of cognition skills (referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy). From simplest to most complex, they are: **knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation**. **Knowledge** includes the ability to define, arrange, memorize, recall, and reproduce. Argument reasons that this skill requires the least individual creativity. **Comprehension** indicates the ability to describe, discuss, express, report, or translate. At this level of thinking, children are interpreting prior work but not necessarily innovating. **Application** enables one to choose, demonstrate, dramatize, solve, and write. Individual creativity emerges at this level of thinking. Next, **analysis** includes the ability to compare and contrast, criticize, discriminate, and experiment. Such skill hinges on the ability to recognize relationships between different fields of information. **Synthesis** includes the ability to compose, construct, create, design, plan, and prepare. At this level of thinking, we begin to create new patterns and relationships between fields of knowledge. Finally, **evaluation** can be described as the ability to argue, assess, defend, predict, and support. This final skill requires connected, creative thinking!

Our curriculum is designed to nurture all six levels of thinking (intellectual behavior) in every child. Our teachers begin their instructional plans with a general theme, to which all other learning activities will be tied. The goal of this practice is to model knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in the context of certain knowledge basics. Allow me to illustrate by grade level.

In Kindergarten, Ms. Wise begins with the general theme of habitats. These young students explore the school as a habitat, their neighborhood and city as a habitat, and then move into space (as a habitat). Kindergarteners continue their connected exploration of the theme of habitats in the spring by examining specific animal life cycles (and the resources necessary to support those cycles, their habitats). Through this curriculum, children learn to recognize patterns between different fields of knowledge; this is **analysis** in practice!

In first grade, Mr. Kittleson focuses on the general theme of synthesis. Essentially, what does it require to construct, create, and formulate ... an idea, a story, or even an island? His students explore the concept of an island as part of their geography and social studies. What is it, physically? How does an island come into being? Why is it unique? Then, they design, plan, and create their own island! This is **synthesis** level thinking, and very creative.



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In second grade, Ms. Zimmerman pursues the general theme of community. Students explore the characteristics of community, within the classroom and beyond its walls. They discuss the kinds of structures (i.e., physical and behavioral) required for a community to succeed and thrive. Through these kinds of initial learning activities, children improve their **comprehension** of the idea of community. They begin to build upon what they know by creating model cities, and by building stories about themselves as community members. They synthesize! The theme of community carries into their studies of South American cultures, such as the Mayans and Aztecs. The students learn about these different communities, and compare them to their own communities. This is analysis level thinking.

In third grade, Ms. Stromberg and Mr. Ashburn use the general theme of perspective to ground and guide their instructional practice. Their curriculum takes the students on a tour of the universe—through the solar system—down to Earth and finally, Denver. The children learn to place their world into perspective. Mr. Ashburn and Ms. Stromberg also explore Asia as part of their social studies; this is yet another way to illustrate different perspectives about the human experience. These students are practicing **analysis**, by explicitly exploring the relationship between very different fields of study (space and Asia).

In fourth grade, Mrs. Quinby’s guiding theme is deep comprehension. She connects that theme through a study of authors and their craft. They are also studying maps, and historical timelines. For instance, her students learn the writing craft by examining great models—wonderful authors! Students learn how to describe an author’s style, and by doing so **apply** those techniques and strategies to improve their own writing. Her students also begin to build comprehensive bodies of work around a single topic area. Students explore and report upon a concept using illustrations, maps, writing pieces, and reading logs. These students deepen their comprehension by integrating different means of study into a unified whole.

In fifth grade, Ms. Abeyta uses the theme of journeys and identity to unify her curriculum plan. At this stage in their learning career at Polaris, students are encouraged to practice **evaluation** skills. Students listen to a read-aloud of *The Odyssey*, to support their creative writing pieces about their personal journeys. Students also compare and contrast many types of literature that focus on personal challenges and adventure.

I hope you join me in celebrating all the connected, creative thinking we do every day in our wonderful Polaris community!

Karin Johnson
Principal



Mr. Isaac tickled our funny bones as Old Man Winter and Coach morphed from fool to cool during our all school assembly!

POLARIS HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH



At an all-school assembly on October 8th, distinguished and disguised visitor from England, Snowella Storm, (aka Ms. Karin Johnson) elucidates the options for indoor recess on snow days, while our beloved chanteuse Eileen Wise entertained the children with a snowy serenade.

Letter from the PTO President

Dear Polaris Families,

It's hard to believe that we are now two months into the school year. Great things have been happening from the get go. Our Electives Program continues to grow and change, with new and exciting offerings each quarter. Our Community Dinners are very popular, with the first two taking place at wonderful local eateries within walking distance of our school. Our new chess team seems to be taking off, and for the first time since our family has been a part of this school, our students are going to participate in the Scripps Spelling Bee.

Our Safety Patrol has turned into a Safety Committee, and we have started a new Green Committee to look into ways in which we can make our school environmentally friendly and energy efficient. We are working on ways to solve the August heat problems, and the window film project is progressing nicely in that direction. The teacher's lounge has undergone a transformation, and we are continuing to clean up and re-arrange spaces throughout the school.

The Jog-A-Thon was a wonderful success. As always, the kids had a great time. This year the Jog-A-Thon elective allowed children from different grades and classes to help run the event by keeping track of the laps run, providing encouragement, and handing out handmade awards for effort and sportsmanship. Children who had finished running stayed to cheer on the groups running after them.

The results of the fundraising survey done last year came back right before the last PTO meeting. We are still waiting for our statistician to complete the Executive Summary before we post the complete results, and are expecting this to happen in the next week or two. In the meantime, it appears that, for the most part, people favored maintaining the status quo. The primary changes arising from the survey results are how we run the Jog-A-Thon and communicate regarding fundraising. Specific to the Jog-A-Thon, we gave out certificates for performance, enthusiasm and sportsmanship rather than prizes for money raised. For the rest of the fundraising, we promise to provide more frequent and visible updates about our fundraising goal and the amounts raised toward that goal.

The PTO is always open to new fundraising ideas so long as they are inclusive of the entire community. The majority of the school appears to be opposed to auctions, gallery crawls and private party fundraisers, and to anything that requires us to sell things. In addition to having SOS as our primary fundraiser, we would like people to have other opportunities to give by doing things that they would normally do. For example, we offer King Soopers' Certificates, as everyone has to buy groceries. When you buy your groceries with the King Soopers' Certificates, money comes back to the school. Target and Office Depot have similar money-back-to-our-school product purchase programs for which you can sign up. We are looking for other options similar to these so that all of us will have opportunities to give to the school in different, non-intrusive ways. There have been a few other suggestions offered, and we are starting to look into the feasibility of those options. Very importantly, we have been meeting our fundraising goals each year, so there is no great need to find new ways to raise money.

Our SOS Resources facilitators can provide more information about fundraising options. In the next few weeks, you will learn who they are and how to reach them. I am also available to answer any questions you may have. My e-mail is sborgos@2bogensnaborgos.com, and my phone number is 720-334-0231.

My main goal this school year, in addition to working with and facilitating the wonderful committee people who are doing such a great job, is to provide better communication around our school, and to document as much as possible. I believe that these are important goals for our community, and I have great hopes that we will benefit by working on these things. Some of this communication, the minutes of the first two PTO meetings, are posted on the web site at <http://polarisprogram.dpsk12.org/pto>.

The last two PTO meetings were very well attended. I would like to encourage everyone to come to at least one meeting this year, if you can, to see what goes on, and to offer your ideas. If you cannot be present, and you have ideas that you would like to see addressed at a meeting, please let me know.

I am still looking for someone to be President-Elect for next year. Our goal has always been for someone to work with the current president so that they can be better prepared for the when they assume office. I am hoping someone will want to do so soon. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, please let me know.

I believe this year is off to a wonderful start. We have a lot of new ideas and positive energy from our new principal, our faculty, our parents and our students. What a great community!

Sue Borgos
PTO President



ListenUp/Sony E-Cycling Day

On Saturday, October 18 at locations in Denver, Parker and Broomfield, consumers can bring in their old electronic equipment to be responsibly recycled by Luminous Recycling. This service is free, and you will receive a \$75 gift certificate good towards certain items sold at Listen Up.

Appliances that you can bring in include:

Televisions
Printers
DVD Players
CD Players
VCRs
Turntables
Speakers
Radios

For more information go to:
<http://www.listenup.com>

SOS Update

S.O.S. (Support our School) is a direct-giving campaign and our school's primary fundraiser. S.O.S. funds critical programs, including classroom support and instruction (paraprofessionals) and our wonderful tech lab. Contributions vary from one-time payments, to reoccurring monthly bank account withdrawals. All we ask is that you donate an amount that makes sense to you. Every donation makes a critical difference to our school community and helps preserve and foster Polaris' rich educational landscape.

This year, S.O.S. is taking a slightly different approach. Here's how:

- Our initial goal of 70K (the amount raised last year) will be reassessed in February, once DPS announces it's '09-'10 funding.
- Unlike previous years, the primary S.O.S. campaign "drive" will take place in late February after our financial needs are solidly determined.
- Frequent PTO fund updates will inform our community about total money earned/total needed
- Traditional S.O.S. "Askers" will transition into Fundraising Resources and serve as classroom liaisons for SOS and other PTO fundraising awareness. Additionally, Fundraising Resources will be able to provide information regarding broader DPS funding questions.

How you can help:

- **Volunteer to be a Classroom Fundraising Resource** - the backbone to S.O.S success! As a Fundraising Resource you'll communicate S.O.S and other school fundraiser successes/information with Polaris families via direct phone calls, face-to-face contact and/or Thursday folders messaging. We'll kick off the year with a crash-course in DPS funding by Kim Benson, CSC Chair and parent extraordinaire! Through volunteering to be an S.O.S. Classroom Resource you'll directly affect Polaris' future and will become well versed on school funding as a whole. To get involved, contact Kirsten Kahn at kirstenakahn@gmail.com.
- **Contribute!** Download a one-time contribution or Electronic Transfer form at <http://polarisprogram.dpsk12.org/SOS> (forms on the right side of the page), or pick one up in the school office. Or, you may mail your check/form to the school c/o S.O.S or bring it the front office and drop in the S.O.S box. All donations are 100% confidential as well as tax deductible. To receive a form by mail, contact kirstenakahn@gmail.com with your name and address, or call 720.839.9739.

Ebert Night Out — A Community Dinner

Our next community dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct 22, from 5-9 at the very local and very delicious **Jonesy's Eat Bar**.

The restaurant is just across the park from the school and features a children's menu as well as many delicious appetizers and entrees (and local craft beers for those who are into that sort of thing...like me!)

<http://www.jeatbar.com>

Jonesy's Eat Bar is kindly offering 10% back to Polaris for the evening sales AND for all of our Ebert teachers a 1/2 price menu item. So come on over and support Ebert and enjoy some fun times with friends and family.

Jonesy's EatBar
400 & 414 East 20th Avenue
Denver, CO
80205
303-506-4548

Questions? Call Judy 303.333.1213 or jbloomharris@yahoo.com



Sock Hop Success

Thanks to all of you who brought and or bought goodies at the Sock Hop earlier this year. You raised over \$500 for the staff hospitality fund! Thank you from the teachers!

Picture Retakes

If you have a 5th grade student or your child missed Picture Day on October 8th retakes are scheduled for Thursday, November 13, 2008.

Check the Lost & Found



As cooler temperatures descend upon us we find our lost & found area filling to the brim at the end of each week. If your children shed their winter gear, please remind them to check the Lost & Found area outside the lunchroom for missing hats, gloves and coats.

It is always a good idea to label outdoor gear to help ensure your children can identify and collect their garments. Any item not claimed from the lost and found will be collected for donation at the end of each month. Please note, in years past we donated only once a year. This has changed, so it is important to have children check the area frequently.

YEARBOOK UPDATE

It is hard to believe that it is already mid-October, and that we have already experienced so many fun, exciting events here at Polaris this year! If you have pictures from any of these events please consider sharing them with the yearbook committee. Our yearbook is completely kid created and the candid photos that fill the pages are one of the best things about our yearbook! Please drop your photos in the office (note: these will be cropped and trimmed so they will not be returned) OR if you have digital images please email them to cori_herbst-loehr@dpsk12.org

*1st Day of School – Sock Hop – 5th Grade Greek Celebration – Electives
Ice Cream Social – Balarat – Everyday Moments at Polaris*

Thanks so much for helping in the success of this Polaris tradition!

Polaris Staff Profile

Sarah Irene Rooke Stowell is new to Polaris this year. She and husband Jake moved to Denver four months ago with their beloved English springer spaniel, Zoe. Having grown up in Rochester, New York, she's no stranger to cold or snow. Rochester's average daily temperature in January is 31 degrees, and the average annual snowfall is 91 inches.

Sarah's first job there was babysitting, for \$3.00 an hour. She needed the money to buy her favorite food – pizza. She'll eat any kind, all day long. Sarah likes pizza so much; it's what she does for fun! Between student teaching in Miss Eileen's kindergarten class, and eating all of that pizza, she also squeezes in time for reading. Her most favorite book right now is "The Kite Runner." Two years ago, Sarah had fun of another kind when she traveled to Panama to visit her brother while he was in the Peace Corps. She stayed for a month, living in a jungle hut!

After planning to study child psychology, Sarah realized she wanted to teach so she could develop longer, more personal relationships with children. It's too early for her to have a favorite subject, but she does have a funniest moment. On the first day of school this year, Miss Eileen asked the kindergarteners what they might be worried about as they started school. One of our Polaris Stars blurted out, "The taxes – they're really getting high!"

MEET THE STAFF



Meet . . . Sarah Stowell
Kindergarten Paraprofessional