

Dates to Remember

Thurs., Dec. 11 9:00am
 K-3rd grade classes present
 Science Projects

6:00pm
 Salute to our Scientists/
 DMNS jeopEARTHY
 presentation

Fri., Dec. 12 11:45am
 Late Start Day 1:10pm
 Elective Performances

Mon., Dec. 15 7:30am
 CSC Meeting

Tues., Dec. 16 8:30am
 CSC Meeting

Fri., Dec 19
 No school, start of
 winter break

Wed., Jan. 7 8:45am
 Students Return from
 Holiday Break

Wed, Jan 14 11:45am
 Late Start Day

From the Principal's Desk...

*There is a single light of science, and to brighten it
 anywhere is to brighten it everywhere.*

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Polaris Families,

Tilting, the earth's frigid and bitter days darken our northern hemisphere as winter solstice approaches. Nipping, numbing, and frosty winter can cause fatigue, lethargy and malaise often resulting in S.A.D. (seasonal affective disorder), which causes depression and moodiness due to lack of sunlight. But, here at Polaris, we are HAPPY – because our **science fair** is happening this week!

Take comfort as the ancients always have. Throughout time, people have marked the end of this seasonal phenomenon by gathering together to celebrate the dawning of longer days, which occurs when the earth tilts again towards the sun.

Tonight we will do the same at our annual **Salute to Our Student Scientists** evening event (6-8:15 PM). We will gather together to celebrate the dawning brilliance of our student scientists, our Polaris Stars! We will applaud their shining efforts to create new knowledge about our natural world. We also will learn together about our world (in a game show format!) with scientists from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Families of all grade levels are encouraged to come bask in the glow of completed student investigations. What a relief! Project deadlines are behind us and it is time to celebrate!

In a flash, your digital cameras will capture student-centered inquiry. This event represents another opportunity to showcase the huge efforts of the students, parents, and teachers to nurture passion, curiosity, and academic competence. Ideally, with facilitation, our students have stepped on stones leading to independent scientific literacy and persuasive reasoning skills.

Perhaps your child's burning questions about the world were not confirmed; or maybe his independent variable was ill-defined or her experiment less than elegant. Not to worry! The whole point of this learning experience is the opportunity to practice the process of creating and defending new information. Without wondering and testing queries, creative thinking would cease.

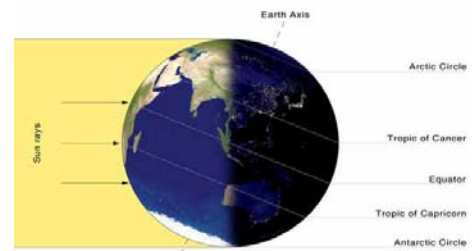
By encouraging our budding scientists to independently reason, we nurture both their courage and their creative thinking. All the skills practiced during the science research project assignment – wondering, literature research, experimental design, measuring, data evaluation, and the ability to speak and write persuasively – fuel our students' future ingenuity.

Spark!

With radiant, warm hearts please give yourselves, your child, your child's teacher, and our fair coordinators (Leigh Alvarado Benson and Julie Berk) a high five, handshake or a hug in celebration of the hard work of authentic inquiry!

Cordially,

Karin Johnson,



Love of the Arts Elective Class Coordinator Needed

Beginning in January 2009, we will be in need of a coordinator for the Love of the Arts elective class. Paddy O' Rouke has coordinated this wonderful class for the last two years and is unable to continue. I would like to personally thank her for all time and dedication to the elective program. We are hoping to continue this. If you would be interested in coordinating this class, please contact Sherry Beardshear at (303) 293-2780 or sherrybeardshear@hotmail.com.

Electric Griddle for Elective Classes Needed

We have several elective cooking classes that are in need of an electric griddle. If you have an electric griddle that is growing dust around your house and you would be willing to donate the griddle to the electives program please contact Sherry Beardshear at (303) 293-2780 or sherrybeardshear@hotmail.com Friday.



Dance Notes

As winter break is approaching, I just want to say thank you for such a great first semester at Ebert. Please join us if possible on December 18th at 1:30 pm for our Winter Break Assembly. First grade will be performing a dance to Jingle Bell Rocks, and one group from each 4th and 5th grade class will be performing a creative winter dance. First graders will need to bring a winter hat and scarf if possible that day to the performance. Thanks for all your support.

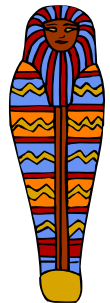
Charity Brueckner
Dance Teacher



4th Grade Update

CROW CANYON UPDATE: Reminder of our MANDATORY MEETING in January. Our Parent Meeting to review DPS and CROW CANYON medical forms and other required information is January 28 in the evening. We expect to have two sessions: both an early and late session that evening. Final times have yet to be announced.

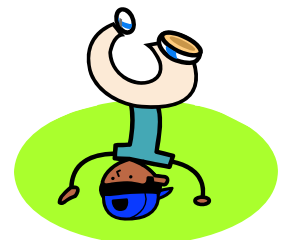
EGYPT SCROLLS DISCOVERED IN UPPER HALLWAY OF EBERT: 4th graders have discovered ancient scrolls explaining the civilization of Egypt. Remarkably, these scrolls are in English. Scholars are trying to figure out how they scrolls migrated to Denver, how Egyptians learned English in 2000 B.C. and how each Polaris student's name was prophetically written on the scrolls. Stumped? Come upstairs and check out the evidence for yourself!



SCHOOL ACTUALLY CONDUCTED IN DECEMBER. Despite a schedule of holiday parties, field trips, assemblies, visiting dignitaries, late starts, and other activities, a crack investigative team has discovered that actual lessons are being conducted in the 4th grade during December. Teachers were unwilling to go on record, but apparently some teachers have been caught assigning writing, reading, and other academic exercises. "This is an outrage," claimed one student, who wished to remain anonymous. "How are we to get anything done in December if teachers are actually making us do work?" Lamented a sad-faced 10 year old who could not be identified, "I haven't even found where my parents hid my presents." Stay tuned for more details.

Elective Classes Performing this Friday, December 12th

A few of the performing art elective classes will be performing for each other, as well as their parents this Friday, December 12th. The final performances will be in the auditorium from 1:10 to 2:05 for the following 1st hour classes: Ms. Zimmerman's Yoga class, Mr. Semlar's African Drumming class, Ms. Gottlieb's Song and Story Circle class, Ms. Dawkin's African Drumming, Dancing, & Acting class, and Ms. Shubin's Music and Movement class. From 2:15 - 3:10 the following 2nd hour classes will be performing: Ms. Dawkin's African Drumming, Dancing, & Acting class, Ms. Griebel's Baton Twirling class, and Ms. Stone's Creative Drama class. Hope to see you there!



Holiday Bash Just One Week Away

Polaris students will go off to winter break with a bang this year. They will sing and dance to celebrate the holiday season. This all-school assembly will begin at 1:30pm and last approximately 45 minutes in the Gym. Parents are welcome to attend the festivities!

The musicians for this performance include the 2nd graders singing a song from the Mexican tradition of Las Posadas as well as one piece from the Jewish tradition of Chanukah. Also performing will be the 3rd graders singing Winter Fantasy and Light the Kinara for Kwanzaa. Both pieces are musically challenging and show off the achievements of these young musicians. The Advanced band will add a whole new dimension to the performance with their three pieces. All musicians should wear something comfortable to this performance. The traditional black and white concert clothes are not necessary. If your student would like to dress in something festive, feel free. (No Santa hats or reindeer antlers please.) The Kindergarten, 1st and select 4th and 5th grade ensembles will add their dances to the musical performance as well. At the conclusion of the Holiday Bash we will sing together and disperse to individual classroom for more celebrations.

For the Love of the Arts

Each year the Polaris community celebrates the arts together. Parents and teachers share their passion for the arts with the students in an interactive gallery and performance. Many talented instrumentalists, vocalists, thespians, poets, storytellers, dancers and even a world record holder have performed for this event. Please begin thinking about sharing your talent with our school.



Messenger in Post

Beginning in the New Year, the Music Messenger will only appear in the Polaris Post. This will conserve resources for our school and also for our environment. Any information regarding concerts or music announcements will be e-blasted or posted on the Polaris website. To receive Polaris email, please contact Katie McCrimmon at polaris@gmail.com.

Letters of Recommendation

Any 5th grader who would like a letter of recommendation for middle school from Mrs. Kielmeyer needs to write a request. In this letter, please include the following items: when you need the letter, who the letter is addressed to, any specific qualities or areas of interest you would like me to highlight. You may give requests to her personally or email them to Corrilee_kielmeyer@dpsk12.org

Happy Holidays! – Mrs. Kielmeyer

Box Tops for Education Update

The October 31 submission of 2100 coupons provided \$210 for the school. These were coupons turned in between March and October, 2008. Thank you for increasing our rate of coupon collection. Some new Box Tops products to look for are Nestle Juicy Juice, Total Cinnamon Crunch, Cascadian Farm granolas, Green Giant vegetables and skillet meals, Pillsbury Thin Pizza Crust, Pillsbury Crescent Recipe Creations, Pillsbury Flaky Twists, Transformers Fruit Shapes, Chex Mix Bars, Cascadian Farms Sweet & Salty Bars, Fiber One Toaster Pastries, and Ziploc Vacuum Bags. Each coupon is worth 10 cents. Just remember to save, clip, and drop them in the large Cheerios box in the office.

And the Ants Go Marching On...

The Ant Hills of Glenarm Street

By Polaris parent Stacey Gottlieb

When my 6-year-old son Joe and I first visited Polaris last spring, we were very impressed with the artwork in the hallways, the books in the library . . . And the ant hills in the weeds across Glenarm Street. If you are a student here at Polaris, you already know about the artwork and the books, but do you know about the neighborhood ants? Now that Joe is a Polaris first-grader, I park our van on Glenarm St. every morning, and every afternoon for pick-up and drop-off. Almost every morning and afternoon, we visit the Glenarm St. ant hills to check on the ants.

We are currently watching nine different ant hills, or "colonies", which we refer to as "Site A", "Site B", and so on... All of the sites (except D) have large mounds (at least a foot), and all are inhabited by medium-sized reddish ants with extra-shiny abdomens. As individual ants, they're pretty boring – but Joe and I are completely hooked on watching them as *colonies*. Every time we visit they surprise us! For example...

Do Ant Alarm Clocks have Snooze Buttons?

The biggest surprise is that each ant hill seems to have its own, well . . . *personality*. Take Site E ants for example. I guess they just aren't morning people, because they really like to sleep in. Morning after morning we find Site E closed up and deserted while the other sites are already swarming with busy ants. At first we thought maybe Site E was simply waiting for the sun to rise over the roof of the school and warm the soil above their nest. And maybe that IS what they are doing? But now the sun hits Site E while Site A is still in shadow – and the A ants still beat the E ants out of bed almost every day.

The Site B Ants Have Read Aesop's Fables .

If the E's are slackers, the ants at Site B are true workaholics. Always up early, rushing around at top speed – the B ants literally *move faster* than any of the others. Even on chilly mornings, when the other ants stay mostly underground, the Site B ants always struggle out of bed, open up the "front door" and plod around stoically on their cold, stiff legs. The B's are also noticeably more curious – or aggressive – than the ants at any of the other sites. When we visit their nest, a handful of Site B ants almost always rush over and try to climb up our legs! It doesn't matter whether we stand to the north, south, east or west. This doesn't happen at any of the other sites. I once sat next to Site C for ten whole minutes without a single ant coming over to "check me out."

Rock Collecting

Everybody knows that ants like to carry pebbles around, right? Ants are like tiny miners, constantly excavating new tunnels and hauling out the rubble, grain by grain. So, Joe and I weren't surprised to see our ants regularly emerging from their tunnels with small rocks and bits of earth to pile up outside. But, guess what? The ants actually spend much more of their time gathering, sorting and arranging material that's already on the surface. Especially pebbles! These ants are all tireless pebble-collectors! If necessary, an ant will lug a pebble to its nest from several yards away, and then wander back and forth around its home hill for minutes at a time until it finds the exact, perfect spot where that pebble belongs.

What Will the Ants Do Next???

I could easily write ten more pages about the funny, puzzling or surprising things that Joe and I have seen happen among the weeds on Glenarm Street since mid-August. But I won't.

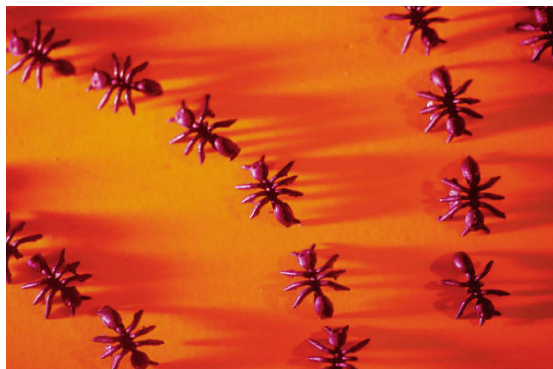
Instead, I will invite you to join the fun – and maybe take it a step further.

You see, Joe and I have made a lot of *observations* about the ants, and we have asked ourselves many *questions*: How do the ants decide when to get up in the morning? How do they kill off all of the plant life around their nests? Who tells them where to pile their pebbles?

But there is only one way to begin answering such questions, and that one way is called the Scientific Method.

I am hoping that, here at Polaris, there may be curious minds ready to take this project to the next level by doing some *Research*, forming *Hypotheses* and designing *Experiments* that can begin to make sense of all this wonderfully mysterious ant behavior.

If so, Joe and I are ready to help! And so are the ants!





Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Program

RIF is a program funded by the federal government and our PTO. Every year we apply to participate in this program. Three times a year, our students have the opportunity to select a free book to take home. Our first RIF day will be December 18. You may want to ask about their book choice that evening and ask to participate in their reading.