



FAMILY NEWSLETTER December 2011-January 2012

Hi to our wonderful DaVinci families and friends! It's been a busy and fun learning environment this past month. See some examples in the section below! Have a great winter break!

EVENTS COMING UP

- **FUND DRIVE:** Please participate in this by adding what you can before we leave for the break!
- **WINTER BREAK** No School Monday December 19, 2011 – Monday, January 2, 2012.
- **TOWN HALL MEETING** "Save the Date!" - Wednesday, January 25th 7:00 - 9:00 pm to meet at the Garden City hall community room for a Strategic Planning Town Hall Meeting. They want everyone's input to help plan the school's future! Come join the staff and board in a discussion designed to outline our priorities at DaVinci Charter School for the next three years. More information will be coming.
- **FAMILY FUN MATH NIGHT** Thursday, February 16. Mark your calendars to join us for a great evening with your children learning math through the fun of games!
- **CULTURAL AWARENESS SHARING:** We'd like to extend an invitation to all families to share their traditions that are a part of the family's background. We hope to have this during one or two of our Wednesday Community Circles during the winter. We have a very diverse school and want to offer this opportunity to ALL families. Please contact Director Cindy with your ideas so we can set a CC date once she knows how many parents/students/guests would like to participate.

GENERAL SCHOOL INFO for YOU

ATTENDANCE LETTERS We hope you'll be sure to get your children to school everyday as we don't want them to miss out on their learning and all the exciting educational activities our teachers have planned. Our hands-on educational philosophy is extremely hard to make up if the interactive lessons are missed. On the flip side, basically the only way charter schools receive funding is through the number of students actually in attendance each day, so absences strongly affect the school's budget in addition to the child's learning. DaVinci attendance policy does not allow students to miss more than 10% of the total number of school days, so reminder letters will be sent the first of the new year to any students who are close or over this percentage in either tardies or absences.

SNOW DAYS We follow the Boise School District's snow day closures. It's rare for us to close due to snow, but watch the TV and radio for any announcements if they are needed. I place DaVinci on their lists, but we will close only if Boise does. We hope we don't have any or we might have to make them up by going to school past our scheduled June 7, 2012 end-of-school-year date!

BOX TOPS & CAMPBELL SOUP LABELS As you prepare those recipes and warm up with soup this winter, please remember to save your education box tops and soup labels. If you'll put them in the box on Secretary Jeanna's desk, we can turn them in to receive money for the school! \$200 has been made so far!

LICE: As every elementary school has happen every year, we've had two reports of head lice the past few weeks. Letters were sent to the classes, but the same information is on our website. This can happen to anyone, but especially seems to happen to girls with long hair who have shared pillows, combs or hats with their buddies. If you see your child itching their head and find they have them, just follow the instructions to get rid of them and Jeanna will give a discreet head check to be sure all is gone when your child returns to school. Thanks for cooperating!

What's been happening in the school?!

- **Community Circle – every Wednesday at 10AM:** *students facilitate with parents always invited!*
 - **11/16 – Wren's 3-4** – presented Reader's Theater they wrote. *.....continued*
 - **11/30 – Brenda's Robotics Group** shared their presentations (including the robot they'd made) from their recent Robotics competition against 16 other schools.

- **12/7- Marti & Pat's 1-2 grade classes** – Sang the songs they'd performed for the RoseWind Retirement Home recently.
- **12/14 – Ben's 3-4 class** will be sharing their individual talents with the school.
- **Experiential Learning with special guests and outside trips** (*examples from past few weeks*):
 - **11/18: Marti & Pat's 1-2 grade classes visited the senior citizens at the RoseWind House.** Students sang songs they'd prepared and interviewed various people to learn about their lives as part of their own unit on families.
 - **11/18: Brenda's 7-8 class participated in the Foothills Learning Center Program** outside Boise as part of their "Naturalist" unit.
 - **11/15 and 12/6: Elizabeth & Shana's kindergarten participated in the GC library's program**
 - **11/29: Brenda's 7-8 class: guest artist Ryan** (watercolorist and scientific artist) taught students to watercolor scenery and nature as part of their "Naturalist" unit after they'd experienced several outdoor field trips.
 - **12/2: Wren's class walked to GC library** for a project.
 - **12/2: Brenda's 7-8 class used public transportation to visit the Asian Art exhibit at the Boise Art Museum** which will be used for their upcoming unit on Asia.
 - **12/9/11: Ryan's 5-6 class's Globe & Compass Day** – volunteer parents helping with art and interactive events integrating with this unit
- **ROBOTICS TEAM:** Congratulations to our 5th-8th grade Lego Robotics team competitors! They represented us well at a recent contest which included 16 area school teams. Thanks to teachers Brenda and Wren for organizing this after-school program – in addition to help from volunteers Rorique Toye, parent, Melissa Rupe, staff member/parent and Tristan Rupe, former DaVinci student.

EDUCATIONAL INFO

How are our students doing academically?

Everyone *chose* to come to DaVinci Charter School for their own reasons. Most of you have told me it's because you feel our hands-on, inquiry-based educational philosophy and Adlerian behavior plan fit your beliefs and your child's style best. Your child is receiving an incredible education from passionate teachers who integrate the arts and address each of their students learning styles, interests and needs. They have received intense training to be able to do this.

However, the entire staff is now working very hard to delve into more specific needs your child may have in reading, math and language. Some need more help in certain areas where they are not as strong as needed and some need to be challenged more. With the help of incredible professional development by guests or staff workshop attendance - in addition to guidance and training from our School Improvement Team who attend special trainings and RTI (Response to Intervention) trainings every month - we are developing assessment methods to gather the necessary data to truly pinpoint each child's needs.

You may start hearing from your child about "mini-tests" that are actually fairly fun and short which are designed to help us gather data throughout the year to see how students are progressing in math, reading and language. We are developing the frameworks for grades K-8 to develop the assessments and curriculum which will give students more consistency in their learning, continuity from class to class and help them fill any gaps they might have in academics. These will be addressed in various ways within the classroom units, including: learning centers, student contracts, special help with skills as needed (ex: math facts, spelling), and other interesting activities. We may ask you to help more at home in creative ways where your interaction will encourage your child.

It's a very complex challenge teaching such a diverse population, but I wanted you to know we are working hard to strike the best balance between our philosophies and state requirements with a goal to continue to help our students love learning while increasing research-based practices to be able to show their deep learning results. We always love to hear about any concerns or delights from our parents, so keep us posted with your thoughts. We continuously strive to improve our methods and results for the benefit of your child's learning!

As always, feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you may have as I continue to appreciate conversations with our students and families! Have a wonderful winter break!

Cindy Hoovel, Director

Cindy.hoovel@davincicharterschools.org (208) 377-0011