

The *Polar Bear Express*

January 2017

**“Poly Drives Students
to Succeed”**



Poly Drive Elementary School

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Dear Poly Drive Families,

I'm hoping by the time you read this that the roads are clear and it will be smooth sailing into the New Year. The winter break is always rejuvenating to me and I hope you are refreshed and ready for the second half of the school year.

We are finishing Winter Benchmarking this month, which means every student will take a screening assessment (K-2nd – FAST and 3rd-6th NWEA MAP) in math and reading that will help us determine growth or needs since Fall assessments. Look for a report in your child's report card or future Wednesday Watch folder.

I have Coffee with Croff scheduled for Friday, January 13th. Some topics of discussion include boundary change impacts on Poly, trimester report cards and some of the online resources we use at Poly. Please RSVP to me at croffk@billingsschools.org to let me know if you are able to make it on the 13th.

Thank you to the parents that participated in the online MyVoice Survey in the month of December. It was exciting to see agreement totals of 95-100% in several categories. Some areas that we are going to work on include communication, goal setting and seeking parent input. If you are interested in seeing all results from staff, students and parents, please come to Coffee with Croff, a PTA meeting or set up a visit with me – I would love to share results with you.

We are once again hosting a blood drive and are looking for parents willing to be heroes. The drive will be on Friday, January 27th and they will start at 2:30 and run until 6pm. You can sign up for a time at:
<https://www.bloodhero.com/index.cfm?group=op&expand=746739&zc=59102>

Sincerely,
Kevin Croff, Principal

KINDNESS & COMPASSION CLUB

By Mrs. Reas

The Giving Hands Wreath was a huge success! Every hand was taken from the wreath and the items brought back were enough to create and fill several back packs. These packs were given to Poly Drive students and families that could use them.

The food drive competition was amazing! Over 400 items were donated and picked up by the Billings Food Bank. Grades 4th – 6th Cats edged out the other Griz.

The KC Club is continuing to meet weekly and are working on several upcoming events.

Thank you for all of your generosity and support!



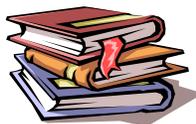
By Mrs. Reas

Congratulations to all PEAK dodgeball teams on an amazing season. The next game is on Jan. 6, 4:00 at Highland school.

Team handball/speedball is the next upcoming sport starting in January. Weekly competitions will be held

mostly on Fridays, locations to be determined.

Remember, PEAK Sports Club will continue on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 – 3:35. Friday mornings from 7:45 – 8:15 2nd – 6th graders can participate in Fitness Club. Meet outside at door #3, outside



LIBRARY NEWS

By Mrs. Caskey

Returning books on time - Make it a New Year's Resolution!

With a new year, how about a resolution to get books back to the library on time! Just a quick reminder on book checkouts - library books are checked out for 1 week. If a student wants to renew a book, they can renew up to 2 times. This means a student could potentially have a book for 3 weeks! Wow, what a long time! The Poly Drive library has a lot of popular books for children, and returning them on time so other students can enjoy reading them too, is greatly appreciated.

Barnes & Noble Bookfair a HUGE hit!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Barnes & Noble Bookfair on November 20th. We were able to raise \$696.87 because of your support. Thank you, thank you, thank you! For a preview of all the new books coming into the library, please visit bit.ly/polylibnews.

Web Watch - Check out these great websites for families:

bit.ly/readaloudideas



SCHOOL CALENDAR

January

- 3 School Back in Session
- 10 PTA Meeting 3:15
- 13 End of Quarter
- 16 NO SCHOOL
- 13 Coffee w/Croff 8:30 RSVP
- 20 Report Cards Go Home
- 27 Spirit Day
- 27 Blood Drive, 2:30-6pm, Gym

February

- 9 EARLY OUT Noon dismissal
- 10-13 NO SCHOOL
- 14 PTA Meeting 3:15
- 22 Midterms 4th-6th grades
- 23 Pizza with Principal 12:00
- 24 Spirit Day – wear Poly Shirt
- 24 Talent Show
6pm, Lewis & Clark School



BULLYING: Bully behavior occurs when there is deliberate intent to harm, dominate, inflict pain, exclude or otherwise cause distress to the person being targeted. The person who bullies purposefully misuses his/her power (size, age, popularity, confidence, verbal ability), usually repeatedly. The balance of power between the bully and target is NOT EQUAL.

Friendships and the Brain

By Kristen Race

Our brains are wired to pay more attention to the negative than the positive. We are actually 3-5 times more sensitive to negative information. Given this tendency it is no surprise that children tend to get caught up in the relationships that aren't working so well. When we intentionally focus on what's going well, such as the relationships that make us feel good, it affects the levels of neurotransmitters, including the releasing of dopamine, in our brain. Dopamine makes us feel good. It also triggers higher levels of alertness, enthusiasm, energy, determination, and attentiveness.

So how do we teach our kids to focus on the good?

1) DON'T: Interview for pain. This term was coined by one of my favorite authors, Michael J. Thompson. It describes a parent's tendency to keep negative situations alive long after the child has worked through the problem.

For example: Your child comes home from school upset because they had a horrible fight with their best friend, Molly. You listen attentively, offer suggestions to help, and send them to school the next day armed to solve the problem. This can be helpful, but here is where the problem often arises. The next day you pick your child up from school and the first thing out of your mouth is, "How did it go with Molly today?" and the next day you say, "Are things still ok with Molly?" This is interviewing for pain. Instead, ask them "How was your day?" Your child may still need help with the situation, and he or she may bring it up again, but in most cases this stuff works itself out in a day or two. When parents continue to bring it up, it keeps a negative situation alive in the child's mind long after the wounds have healed.

2) DO: Pay attention to the good stuff. It is easy for kids to get caught up in the one or two kids who are not interested in being their friend instead of focusing on all of the kids who are kind to them and want to play with them all the time. My friend Sylvie told me that her father always used to ask her, "Who was a good friend to you today?" What a great way to keep the focus on the positive! Try it at dinner or when you pick your kids up from school, ask your kids, ask your spouse, and see what emerges. After they've weighed in on who was a good friend to them, ask who they were a good friend to, today, as well. Help them understand that having good friends means being a good friend.

When your child is feeling the burden of social situations, understand that this is normal, listen mindfully, focus on the positive and resist the urge to immediately swoop in and solve everything for them.

Part of our roles, as parents, is to help our child come up with their own solutions. Sometimes that means being aware of how you might be feeling while listening to your upset child. If you notice your own internal stress levels rising, remember that a few mindful breaths will get your own prefrontal cortex back online. As you're able to get out of your alarm brain and into your smart brain, you'll be a much better sounding board and support system for your child.