

# SUNDERLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

<http://www.ses.sunderland.ma.us>

## SUNDERLAND SENTINEL

*Mission: To ensure a positive, safe and respectful environment that inspires our children to realize, develop and attain their full potential in a school that values diversity and individual needs.*

### Principal's Message ~ Timothy Merritt

Hello Sunderland Families:

Happy New Year and welcome back to all of you. I hope the Holiday break provided you with an opportunity to spend some quality time with your students. Here at school we are reenergized and back to the business of providing an exciting and essential educational experience for your child.

I'm very happy with the way our 2009-2010 school year has begun and I have every reason to believe we will continue on the path to having a successful year here in Sunderland for all of your children. My staff and faculty continue to amaze and inspire me with their energy, their efforts and their enthusiasm each and every day. We are truly blessed with an outstanding group of educators who have chosen to dedicate their professional lives to the enrichment of your children. I am fortunate to be part of such a committed team.

As we head into the heart of the school year, there are many good things to tell you about. Please take a moment to read through this edition of the Sentinel. I encourage you to attend any of the upcoming school events as a way to get a further appreciation for the events taking place here at your child's school.

This time of year can be challenging with the onset of colder temperatures but we should remind ourselves that the daylight is increasing and the days will continue to stretch longer for the remainder of the school year. Even with the winds blowing here on Swampfield Drive, we will make every effort to provide your children with time outdoors to enjoy the beauty of our New England winter. On most days you can be assured that your students will have outdoor recess as long as weather permits. Please consider this as you are preparing your child to depart for school each morning. Hats, gloves or mittens, boots and snow pants should be available for them each day. Many students have chosen to keep some of these items here so they are able to take advantage of this part of their school day. Daily exercise is important for our students. I would ask all parents to make sure their child is prepared to participate throughout the winter months.

Given that winter is upon us, I wanted to clarify for our parents how our School Closing or Delay process works. Whenever weather conditions threaten to delay the opening of school, our superintendent is up early in the morning coordinating with supervisors from the highway departments of all four towns that our district serves. She is also in touch with local superintendents to gauge the breadth of the weather event. By 5:15 a.m. a decision is generally reached, at which time she contacts all of her building principals and the local media to alert us to any closing or delay that might occur. I should note that if we have a delay, it will never be less than two hours. When I receive news—as I did—on one snowy morning in December, I execute the Alert Now system, notifying all Sunderland school families and staff of the delay or cancellation of school. In the event of a cancellation, all afternoon or evening activities that are school-related would be cancelled or postponed to another date. On those mornings, there may not be any personnel in the school until the roads have been safely cleared for travel. Please let us know, however, if you do not receive notification through our Alert Now system. It is important to us that you are notified promptly before heading out the door on those mornings. Remember too, that it is always your right as a parent to keep your student out of school on any day that you deem necessary. It would be helpful if you could notify us however.

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Inside this issue:

Principal's Message	1
Principal's Message cont	2
Math-a-thon Update	3
Café Sun	3
All School Sing	3

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### January 2010

- 11: PTO @ 6:30 P
- 15: 6P Winter Stories & Songs w/ Roger Tinnell 6:30 P
- 16: State Elections 6A - 9P
- 18: No School ~ Martin Luther King Day Observed
- 19: School Committee - 7P
- 27: UMass Basketball Day Grades 3-6 11A-3P
- 27: REPORTS CARDS ISSUED
- 28-29: NO SCHOOL ~ Teacher In-service Days

#### LOST & FOUND



To help slow down the rapid growth of our Lost and Found, please remember to put your child's name on all articles of clothing or other personal items that he/she may bring to school.

## Principal's Message *(con't)*

Speaking of the outdoors, I have been pleased with the way our change in the end of the day dismissal protocol has been going since the fall. Students are getting to their busses more efficiently and in an orderly and safer fashion and I expect this will continue. One area that I would like to see improved is the activity that has been taking place down at the Walkers' Pick Up area by the library and the staff parking lot. While I have adult staff supervising the end of the day routine there, I have seen too much activity which I would deem as unsafe with students playing tag, wrestling with each other and generally creating a potential risk through their behavior-- all while our buses and personal vehicles are making their way out of the parking lot. I am not comfortable with this.

As a way to improve the safety of this situation, I ask that parents picking up their children arrive a few minutes before the 3:00 p.m. dismissal and be ready to escort their children out of the area as soon as they appear. If parents elect to spend some moments visiting with others, I would only ask that they help us improve matters by supervising their children and discouraging any running or roughhousing. Even when the buses have departed the campus, that area remains one of high activity as motor vehicles are passing through. Please help us to make this area as safe as we can as we close out each day. I hope I can count on your understanding and your cooperation on behalf of all our students and staff here in Sunderland.

Activity will be the name of the game on Saturday February 6<sup>th</sup> when the PTO hosts the first **Polka Night Sweetheart Dance** here in Sunderland. Originally scheduled to take place in the cafeteria, we have received so much advance interest in this night of dance and music that we have decided to move it into our gymnasium. Eddie Forman and his Orchestra will be performing and the evening's fundraiser promises to be a hit. Childcare is being provided by the Frontier Regional National Honor Society. The event will include performances by our 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade dancers under the direction of Debra Zimnowski. I've even heard talk of a special performance by some of our town Police and Fire personnel and perhaps a few elected officials. There will be a dessert bar and light snacks and of course the inspiring music of Eddie Forman and his renowned band. The dance begins at 6:30 p.m. and goes until 10:00 p.m. Tickets will be available in our main office and at the door. Proceeds will be going to several town departments including our Police, Fire and Public Safety teams and the Sunderland PTO. Please consider making the Sweetheart Dance a family night out or an early Valentine's date with that special someone.

Once again, please accept my wishes for a happy and healthy new year. As always, I invite you to stop in and spend some time with us here at school. Research continues to support the notion that the more parents and families can get involved in their child's education, the more successful that child's experience can become. I know that is not always easy, but I can guarantee you that the reward will be worth it. Let me know how I can help you make that happen.

Sincerely,

Tim Merritt  
Interim Principal

# PTO MATTERS



We are looking to complete our list of Room Parents for the balance of the year. A sign up sheet is located in the front entrance of the school, or you may sign up with your teacher.

This role, which includes overall support to your classroom and teacher (it's a mild commitment), becomes larger during our Spring Gift Basket Raffle. Basically, we need the Room Parents to be the point person and "administrator" for the coordination of **collecting donations** for your classes Gift Basket. The Room Parents also select the theme that your Gift Basket will be for this year.

More info and specifics regarding the Gift Basket Raffle will be coming your way, and possibly a quick meeting to connect about the details will be scheduled some time after our **next PTO meeting, January 11<sup>th</sup>**. A giant "thank you" to those who step up and get involved. It's really a fun occasion and process with a certain level of competitiveness, which is healthy and contributes to the phenomenal baskets that have been raffled in the past.

Sincerely,  
Your PTO Officers

Tropicana Orange  
Juice Program  
~ Patricia Williams~

Thank you to all who contributed to the Tropicana Rainforest project. We saved 10,800 square feet of rainforest! Our rainforest is called the Ashaninka Corridor in Peru.



## All School Sing



Our next All-School Sing will also be on Tuesday, January 26th at 2:10 in the school gymnasium. Bring your voices and let's all sing together!

## Math-a-thon Update

Thank you to the fifty students who completed the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Math-a-thon and to all the parents who helped. This year we raised \$3,104.98 for this worthwhile cause. Prizes have been ordered and should arrive in 2-4 weeks. As soon as they come in, we will pass them out. If you have any questions, please call the school.

## CAFE SUN FOR KIDS!

The next highly anticipated Cafe Sun for Kids will be during lunchtime on Tuesday, January 26, 2010 in the school cafeteria.

We have lots of talented children who will be entertaining us with singing, dancing, comedy, instrumental performances and even a science experiment! Everyone is welcome.

Grades 1 & 2 Performances : 12:10-12:25

Grades 3 & 4 Performances: 12:40-12:55

Grades 5 & 6 Performances: 1:00-1:20