



Berenda Elementary

December 2020

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## Principal's Message

Happy Holidays to everyone!

I hope everyone had time over their Thanksgiving break to Give Thanks for all that we have. I know it is easy to be overwhelmed with life and sometimes it is hard to remember all of the blessings that we have in our lives. I was reading a book to one of the classes the other day and I challenged the students to write down three things each day for a week that they were thankful for. If you do this, I told them, you will be amazed at how your outlook on life changes.

Perspective is important. Right now we are experiencing a pandemic that is similar to one that was experienced about 100 years ago. We can all discuss the problems with distance learning, but, with technology, we are in a much better position to continue to educate our children. Teachers have the ability to produce and deliver lessons for students who are not physically in school. Would we like to have students back in school? YES! But, for now, this is what we have to do.

How can we make this distance learning process better?

**I know how...and we can do this together...but I will need your help!**

We currently have a lot of students who are not participating in their Zoom lessons. Some have their video on but we can't see their faces, some don't have their video on at all, and some students won't respond to their teacher when they are asked a question. You can imagine how hard that makes it for teachers to continue to do their best. And, as a parent, I'm sure many of you would not be happy with your child acting that way.

A while back, students were all told that they do not have to have their cameras on during their Zoom lessons. I know there may be some very good reasons for a camera to be off and I will always respect and honor those requests. But, I can tell you from observing many classroom lessons that the learning is better for your children when they have their video on AND they are participating. **I can't mandate having their video on, but you can.** You can tell your child that they have to have their video on during class and we can support your decision.

We've all been young. We know how easy it is to be distracted. Having the video on helps the teacher keep students focused. For example, during math lessons, teachers will have students

show their white boards. This is how we can tell if your child is mastering the steps. Without the video on and your child visible to us, we don't know if they are struggling or if they are understanding the concept.

Teachers want to help...and we know you want us to help your child learn. But, without their video on, it is difficult to support them as much as we would like. So, if you want your child's video on...tell them and let their teacher know through ParentSquare.

I have always said that we need to work as a team to help our Broncos learn. If there is anything we can do to help, please let me know.

Christmas Vacation is coming soon.  
Enjoy this time with your family...and count your blessings.  
Mr. Christiansen  
Be Safe and Give Grace!

## What's coming...

### Packet pickup -

1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade only on **Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> from 10:00-12:30.**

Kinder only on **Dec 9<sup>th</sup> from 11:00-12:00** to pick up Gingerbread House supplies.

We will also be open on **Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and Dec 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-5:45** for those of you who need a later pickup time.

**Semester grades are coming soon.** Remember, you can have your child show you on their Google Classroom what assignments they have 'turned in' and what assignments they have 'missing'. You can also go to your Parent Portal account and check on grades there. It is important to do this and discuss what you see with your child. Give them praise where they are doing well and give them help and encouragement where they need support.

## Event Highlights

Since we can't get together, our annual Christmas Sing-a-long will be modified this year. Teachers will be sharing the video and songs at various times during the last week before we go off on Christmas vacation.

Jingle Bell Jog will also be different. This is always a fun time and we want to keep building those memories for our students. Watch for another Parent Square message explaining how you can get your whole family involved in our Jingle Bell Jog event this year. We are going to ask students to submit a Christmas picture of you'all walking/jogging (in your Christmas outfit).

## Student Health & Wellness

Using Digital Screen Devices In An Eye-Friendly Way

Children are spending more time than ever looking at screens. This makes it especially important to take steps that can help prevent tired, sore eyes in children.

Staring at a screen for long stretches without taking breaks can cause symptoms such as:

- Eye fatigue. Muscles around the eye, like any others, can get tired from continued use. Using screen devices where lighting is less than ideal can lead to fatigue from squinting.
- Blurry vision. Gazing at the same distance for an extended time can cause a child's vision to blur when he or she looks away from the screen.
- Dry eyes. Studies show that people blink significantly less often when concentrating on a digital screen, which can leave eyes dry and irritated.

You can help by:

- Encouraging your child to take frequent breaks. The American Optometric Association recommends the 20/20/20 rule: look away from the screen every 20 minutes, focus on an object at least 20 feet away, for at least 20 seconds.
- Reminding your child to blink. Staring at a computer may cut blinking rates by half and cause dry eyes. Encourage your child to try to blink extra, especially when they take breaks.
- Help with screen positioning. Make sure the screen on your child's desktop or laptop computer is slightly below eye level.
- Watching room lighting. To cut down on glare and eye fatigue with computer use, try reducing the level of lighting in a room roughly in half what it would be for other activities such as writing on paper or working on crafts.
- Take your child for regular vision screenings.

Winter Break is coming too!

## **A tip for parents on mental breaks during winter break**



How can we take care of the mental health of our family during a pandemic winter break? The American Psychiatric Association has several recommendations that may help.

First, keep a regular schedule that includes work time, family time, meal and cooking time, exercise time, cleaning time, and time for reaching out to loved ones. Social distancing does not mean complete isolation. Make sure you're contacting friends and family every day by phone or video chat.

Exercise is also important for taking your mind off things. Get as much fresh air as you can. You should be able to walk in the neighborhood or local park while maintaining 6 feet from others.

It's by supporting each other and giving ourselves permission to enjoy mental breaks and time off to their fullest that we'll get through this with stronger, clearer minds.