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# THE AMBERLY ADVANTAGE

*A School Community Dedicated to Providing a Nurturing and Challenging Learning Environment for All*

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## **Amberly Elementary: A Great Place To Learn and Grow** *Mary Daoust, Principal*

Welcome to Amberly Elementary School! It is my pleasure to welcome approximately 575 Young Five through fifth grade students to the 2009-10 school year. The students' energy, excitement, and eagerness to learn will be instrumental in achieving educational excellence this school year. We know through cooperative efforts every student will experience success and will meet the high academic and behavioral expectations we have at Amberly!

***YOU ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO OUR SCHOOL!!*** A successful educational experience must be a partnership between the home and school. Educators and parents/guardians alike contribute to the growth and development of our students' lives. As we work together, our efforts can provide the best possible educational experience for children. Educating children is as exciting as it is challenging. We look forward to meeting your child's needs together with you.

Please remember Amberly is your school and is a place for both students and families to be successful. We are eager to maintain a school community dedicated to providing a nurturing, safe and challenging learning environment for all.

The Amberly staff invites you to be active participants in your child's education. We know when parents/ guardians and school staff work closely together student achievement increases.

Please keep in touch with your child's teacher. Assist the APT in its efforts to support school programs and serve our school community. Most importantly, take every opportunity to work with your child in everyday learning situations, to encourage reading and discuss what s/he is learning at school.

*We are confident the combined efforts of energized students, supportive parents/guardians, and our dedicated staff will make Amberly Elementary School the best place for your children to learn and grow throughout the 2009-10 school year!*

### *Parents and Teachers*

*I dreamed I stood in a studio  
And watched two sculptors there  
The clay they used was a young child's mind  
And they fashioned it with care.*

*One was a teacher; the tools she used  
were books and music and art;  
One was a parent with a guiding hand  
and a gentle loving heart.*

*And when at last their work was done  
They were proud of what they had wrought  
For the things they had worked into the child  
Could never be sold or bought.*

*And each agreed she would have failed  
if she had worked alone.  
For behind the parent stood the school,  
and behind the teacher stood the home.*

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## Food Allergies At Amberly

Severe food allergies are becoming more and more prevalent in children. Severe reactions can occur due to contact, inhalation and/or ingestion of the allergen. Reactions to specific foods can range from rashes & hives to anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is a reaction that leads to difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure and shock which are potentially fatal. ***Over 150 deaths per year occur from food anaphylaxis, mostly from peanut and tree nut allergies.***

At Amberly Elementary we have a number of children with life-threatening food allergies, particularly to peanuts and tree nuts. If exposed to peanuts/nuts these students may develop a life-threatening allergic reaction requiring immediate medical treatment. ***The most important aspect of managing food allergies is avoidance and prevention.***

To assist these students in being safe at school, we have developed specific procedures, including having students wash their hands regularly and the establishment of a “peanut free” table in the cafeteria. ***We are also requesting parents/guardians avoid sending peanut or nut containing products to school with your children to eat in the cafeteria and/or classroom.***

We appreciate your support of these procedures and understanding of the challenges these students and their families have in dealing with extreme food allergies. ***Thank you for your cooperation and feel free to contact Principal Mary Daoust with any questions you may have.***



## Medication Distribution in School

***Whenever possible, we encourage parents/guardians to administer medication to children at home.*** Please check with your child’s physician if prescribed medication can be given outside the school day, thereby eliminating the bringing of medication to school. Written consent and instruction from a licensed practitioner and a parent/guardian is required for any type of medication (prescribed and over-the-counter) to be administered at school. Authorization/Consent must be given on a Portage Public Schools Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization Form. All medication must be brought to school in the original container with the child’s name, drug and dosage, time and quantity to be given and physician's name and duration of treatment on the container’s label. ***Under no circumstances will a student be given medication or allowed to take medication without written consent from a licensed practitioner and parent/guardian.***

Medication Authorization/Consent forms are available at the school office or on the Amberly website:

***[http://www.portageps.org/schools/elementary/amb/information/forms/Medication\\_Prescriber.pdf](http://www.portageps.org/schools/elementary/amb/information/forms/Medication_Prescriber.pdf)***

## Pesticide Notification

Due to Acts 636 and 637 of the MI State Department of Agriculture’s Pesticide Notification Law, schools are required to notify parents/guardians of the dates they will receive exterminator services. Amberly Elementary School will receive routine pest control services monthly after school hours on the following dates:

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Tuesday, December 14, 2009

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Tuesday, May 11, 2010

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

## Mileage Club Volunteers Needed!

The Amberly Mileage Club will be starting soon and will continue through November. Last year the Mileage Club was extremely successful for our students! In order to continue this success, we need parent volunteers to assist students in participating in the Mileage Club during their recess time. The time frame is from 10:50 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. one day every other week, one day per week, or more if you are able to. ***Please contact Marcia Elliott, Guidance Counselor, at 323-5975 or via email at [melliott@portageps.org](mailto:melliott@portageps.org) to volunteer.*** If you cannot commit to a specific day, but would like to help, please also contact Ms. Elliott, as substitute Mileage Club volunteers are also needed.

### Third Annual BBQ Kickoff: A Success!!

On Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup> the APT sponsored the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Amberly BBQ Kickoff. This event allowed Amberly families time to meet and visit with each other in a relaxed fun environment. We had a great turn out, wonderful weather and LOTS OF FUN!!

**A big "THANK YOU" to Sherri & Rodney Wagner for organizing this event.** *Thank you also to Portage Central National Honor Society student volunteers, all the individuals who donated to the basket raffle, purchased items, grilled, served, ran activity stations, helped with set-up/clean-up, and did time in the dunk-tank!*

### Picture Day: September 23<sup>rd</sup>

SchoolPictures.Com will be taking student school pictures on Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Picture order forms will be sent home with students on Friday, Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>. ***Mark your calendars for Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> and send your child to school with a big, beautiful smile!***

## WALK TO SCHOOL DAY: OCTOBER 7<sup>th</sup>

Amberly will again be participating in the National Walk to School Day this school year! On Wednesday, October 7, 2008, hundreds of Michigan school children will be joined by parents and other community members and start their day with an early morning walk or bike ride to school. Walk to School Day is an international event sponsored by the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports, Michigan Department of Community Health, and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

While walking to school was commonplace just a generation ago, traffic jams around schools are now the norm. Students are losing an opportunity for regular physical activity that is good for their health by riding to school in cars. On Walk to School Day, students have a special opportunity to celebrate the fun of walking and/or biking.

***We are asking parents/guardians to mark the October 7<sup>th</sup> on their calendar to accompany their child on a walk or bike ride to and from school.*** Further information will be sent home in Friday Folders.

### Participating in Walk to School Day provides:

- ✓ **Quality time for parents, neighbors and students**
- ✓ **A way to get exercise**
- ✓ **A way to enjoy the great outdoors**
- ✓ **Raises awareness of traffic/walking safety**
- ✓ **Creates environmental awareness of air quality around schools**

## Student Count Day: Wednesday, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>



Student Count Day across the State of Michigan is Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. On this day, the official number of students school districts and schools receive funding for is determined. As with any school day, your child should be in school unless they are ill or have a family emergency. If your child is absent on Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, we will need written verification of their absence.



## September Birthday Celebrations

Students with birthdays during the month of September will enjoy an ice cream cup with Mrs. Daoust on Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. Students will have a choice of a vanilla, chocolate or strawberry ice cream cup. *If your child has food sensitivities to any ingredients that may be found in any of the ice cream cups, please contact the office so a substitute treat can be provided.* If your family does not celebrate birthdays, please also inform the office and an invitation will not be sent to your child.

## Welcome New Amberly Staff!

Please extend a warm Amberly welcome to the following new staff members to our school community:  
**Pam Gordon – First Grade:** Pam has been teaching in the Portage Public Schools for 2 years. Prior to Amberly, Pam taught Y5/Kindergarten at Haverhill Elementary. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Central Michigan University. In Pam's free time, she runs and is currently training for her first marathon!

**Mary Jensen – Resource Teacher:** Mary is a part-time resource support teacher at Amberly. She also works part-time at the new Twelfth Street Elementary. Mary has taught in the Portage Public School for 10 years. She has 3 grown children and enjoys spending her free time with her husband, David.

**Pam McGuire– Resource Teacher:** Pam is a part-time Title One Resource Teacher. Pam is a returning teacher to Amberly. She has taught 20 years in the Portage Public Schools at a variety of elementary grade levels. When Pam isn't teaching at Amberly or Central Elementary Schools, you can find her watching Vicksburg High School sporting events that involve her two high school children, Aaron & Meg, and her coaching husband, Shawn.

We also have a number of wonderful Title One Para-educators new to Amberly. These individuals are **Mary Ellen Tang, Karen Casanto, Ruth Beranek, and Deb Weber.**

## Conference Sign Ups: Contact The Office

Parents/guardians of students in grades Y5-4<sup>th</sup> were asked to sign up for Fall & Winter Parent-Teacher Conferences during Open House on Thursday, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>. **If you did not sign up for conferences during Open House, please visit the Amberly office ASAP and do so!**

### Fall Conference Dates

**Wednesday & Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>,  
5-8p.m.**

### Winter Conference Dates

**Wednesday and Thursday, February 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>,  
5-8 p.m.**

## No Latex Balloons At Amberly

**It is estimated that between 8,800 and 53,000 Michigan school children could have or develop latex sensitivity. Allergic reactions to latex can range from mild to life-threatening. Amberly currently has students who are allergic to latex. Because of this and the increased incidence in latex sensitivity, *NO latex balloons are allowed in the school building.* Non-latex gloves & Band-Aids are used in our health room.**

## **Birthday Treat & Invitation Procedures**

As part of the District's energy conservation plan, the number of refrigerators in schools has been reduced. Due to this fact, **we are asking parents not to send birthday treats or snacks that need refrigeration.**

**Please also only send enough treats for your child's class. Our focus is student learning and we are seeking to maintain a consistent, calm educational environment. This school year, students will not be allowed to deliver treats throughout the school. Again, send only enough birthday treats for the number of students in your child's classroom.**

As we have many children at Amberly with food allergies and sensitivities, we also request that you **consider sending non-edible treats for your child to share with classmates, such as special pencils, bookmarks, or erasers.**

**Deliveries of flowers or balloons should not be made at school.** These deliveries to students often turn into a distraction to the learning process. Consequently, balloons and flowers will not be delivered to classrooms and will remain in the office until the end of the school day for the student to pick up.

**We also request that students NOT hand-out party invitations at school.**

Disappointment students may feel about not being invited to a party, causes a disruption to the educational environment. ***Invitations to parties should be made outside of the school environment.***

## **AMBERLY SCHOOL DAY**

**Start of School Day Bell: 8:35a.m.**

**Grades 1 through 5:  
8:35 a.m. – 3:42 a.m.**

**Morning Kindergarten:  
8:35 a.m. – 11:44 a.m.**

**Afternoon Kindergarten:  
12:35 p.m. – 3:42 p.m.**

**Half Day Dismissal: 11:57 a.m.**

### **RECESS AND LUNCH SCHEDULE**

**Grade Two:**  
Recess – 10:50 -11:20 a.m.  
Lunch – 11:20- 11:46 a.m.

**Grade Three:**  
Recess – 11:20 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  
Lunch – 11:50 a.m. – 12:16 p.m.

**Grade One:**  
Recess – 11:50 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.  
Lunch – 12:20 – 12:46 p.m.

**Grade Four:**  
Recess – 12:20 – 12:50 p.m.  
Lunch – 12:50 – 1:16 p.m.

**Grade Five:**  
Recess - 12:50 – 1:20 p.m.  
Lunch – 1:20 –1:46p.m.



## Visiting Your Child's Class

We want to welcome parents/guardians to visit Amberly and your child's classes. *However, we ask that you not ask for the teacher's time and attention when they are responsible for and needed by over twenty students, including times when students are entering and leaving the building before school and at dismissal.* Teachers often get caught in the dilemma of either attending to a parent at the doorway or to the students. It is crucial that teacher time is spent engaging and working with students and to assist in providing a safe school environment by welcoming students and monitoring hallway traffic. To maintain a safe environment conducive to learning right up to the last minute of school, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. *Parents/guardians bringing and picking up students from school are to drop off or pick up students at designated parking areas and/or in the main lobby.*
2. *All visitors to Amberly during the school day MUST sign in the office and obtain a visitor's badge.*
3. *All visits are to be arranged with the teacher a minimum of 24 hours in advanced.*
4. *Classroom visits are for observation, not consultation. If you wish to meet with the teacher, please schedule a conference outside of the instructional day.*



### WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT?



The best source of information is always the adult who initially provided the information and/or is closest to the situation. In most cases the teacher will be the best person to respond to questions. Questions regarding student progress, assignments, tests, or class related information should be directed to the teacher responsible for the class. If parents/guardians have special situations they need to discuss, but are unsure of whom to contact, the classroom teacher is also a good starting point. Research shows students whose parents and teachers have good communication and a strong partnership have better attitudes and perform better in school. We hope to establish strong positive relationships with families to support student success!

## Student Arrival At School

The elementary school day begins at 8:35 a.m. Students should not arrive on school grounds prior to 8:25 a.m. Students who arrive prior to this time will be unsupervised; we are always concerned for student safety and would appreciate your cooperation in this matter. For student safety and supervision **all students should enter via the main entry door, the south parking lot door or bus loop door.** These are the only doors used for entry to school in the morning.

*Never lose sight of the fact that the most important yardstick  
of your success will be how you treat other people –  
your family, friends and co-workers,  
and even strangers you meet along the way.*

*Barbara Bush*

## **Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child From School**

Student safety is always our first concern when students enter and leave the building. If you are dropping off and/or picking up your child at school, please remember:

- **PROCEED THROUGH THE LOOP IN A SLOW CAUTIOUS MANNER. Do not drive through open handicapped spots or cross solid lines to proceed through the loop area more quickly.**
- **Drive cautiously in the drop off/pick up loop. Stop, let your child out of the car in a timely fashion, and proceed through the loop area.**
- **Students in grades Y5 – 2<sup>nd</sup> should be dropped off at the main entrance of the building by the front parking lot. STUDENTS SHOULD NOT BE DROPPED OFF AT THE SOUTH DOOR OF THE FRONT PARKING LOT (by the 4<sup>th</sup> /5<sup>th</sup> grade hallway), as this causes a traffic back-up on Amberly Street.**
- **Third through fifth grade students should be dropped off in the south parking lot entry doors (by the art room).**
- **Do not stop on crosswalk areas to let your child out of the car.**
- **If you need to walk your child into the building and/or are waiting for them in the lobby at dismissal time, you need to park in the short term parking area in the front parking lot or in a visitor spot in the south parking lot. DO NOT PARK AND LEAVE YOUR CAR IN THE DROP OFF/PICK UP LOOP AT ANYTIME!!**

### **Third, Fourth and Fifth Graders Participate in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)**

*Third, fourth and fifth graders throughout the state of Michigan will participate in MEAP testing from Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, October 22, 2009.* Third graders will be tested in the areas of Reading and Mathematics. Fourth graders will be testing in the areas of Reading, Mathematics and Writing. Fifth graders will be tested in the areas of Reading, Mathematics and Science. Results from the MEAP are used to assess Amberly Elementary School's and the entire school district's performance in comparison to all other schools and districts in the state of Michigan. MEAP results are also used to insure our curriculum is appropriately aligned to the State of Michigan Curriculum Framework. Furthermore, student performance on this test may directly relate to educational services they may be offered in the future.

*The staff of Amberly Elementary School request that parents/guardians of third, fourth and fifth grade students insure your child eats well-balanced meals, gets sufficient rest, and limits participation in evening activities during testing weeks, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> through Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>.* Students perform their very best when they come to school well rested, well nourished and well prepared. We request families of third, fourth and fifth graders spend time with their children discussing the importance of taking the MEAP test in a serious manner. Encourage your child to perform his/her best and to come to school relaxed and with a positive attitude.

*Thank you for reinforcing our efforts to make the upcoming state assessment a successful experience for our students. The success of Amberly students is ultimately built on the high expectations you have for your child and all children in the Portage Public Schools. Thank you for your ongoing involvement and support of education at Amberly Elementary School.*



## Changes in End of The Day Routines

If your child's after school routine will change, please be sure to communicate this to your child and to your child's teacher prior to the school day that will be effected. The school secretaries can be overwhelmed by parental phone calls at the end of the school day requesting a change in schedule information be relayed to students. These last minute exchanges of information can result in confusion, mistakes and possible unsafe situations for all involved - students, teachers, bus drivers and parents. ***Please provide teachers with a written explanation of any changes in your child's schedule that will be taking place and review the change with your child prior to sending him/her to school.***

Changes in bussing can only be made with advanced written authorization from the parent/guardian and approval from the Transportation Department. Please contact the Transportation Department (323-5151) and/or send a note to the school office a minimum of 24 hours in advance of any requested change in bussing.

## Delivery of Messages To Students

In an effort to provide the least disruptive learning environment for students and teachers, messages regarding changes in end of the day routines, after school information and/or other communication, will be given to students at 3:30 p.m. each school day. Office staff will not disrupt classes on a case by case basis, but instead will hold messages until 3:30 p.m. and ask for students to come to the office to receive them at the end of the school day.

***We ask that parents/guardians take time to review student after school plans with children prior to departure to school and to avoid calling the school office with reminders or changes in routines unless it is an emergency.***

## Current Enrollment Information Is Essential!

The information parents/guardians are asked to submit on enrollment forms is extremely important and required by law and/or local policies. We use the enrollment form to serve our students and parents/guardians in the most effective manner we can. Accurate names, dates, phone numbers, addresses, health status and other information are important in our day to day operations and in emergencies. If areas on the enrollment form are incomplete, an office staff member will be contacting you for additional information. It is very important these enrollment forms are completed thoroughly, in a timely manner, and updated as change in contact or health information warrants.

## GOOD ATTENDANCE: A KEY TO SUCCESS

**Attendance Phone Line: 323-5996**

**Email: [ldunphey@portageps.org](mailto:ldunphey@portageps.org)**

Good attendance supports school success! We want students to be in school every day every minute school is in session. If a student must be absent, parents/guardians should call the Amberly School Attendance Line before 9 a.m. **To access the attendance line dial Amberly's attendance phone number – 323-5996. Callers will be asked to leave your child's name, grade, teacher, date of, and reason for absence. If parents/guardians would like homework collected, please also state this in the message. FOR AN ABSENCE TO BE CONSIDERED "EXCUSED" WE MUST HAVE CONTACT FROM A PARENT /GUARDIAN VERIFYING THE STUDENT ABSENCE. IF CONTACT IS NOT RECEIVED, THE ABSENCE WILL BE CONSIDERED 'UNEXCUSED'.**

Parents/guardians may also email notification of a child's absence. To use this mode of communication email: [ldunphey@portageps.org](mailto:ldunphey@portageps.org) and include the following information in your correspondence: child's name, grade, teacher, date of and reason for absence.



## Sign Up To Be On Amberly's List-Serve!!

Sign up to receive school news and reminders of upcoming Amberly events via the school email list-serve. Simply go to the Amberly webpage at: <http://www.portageps.org/schools/elementary/amb/default.htm>, scroll to the bottom of the page and complete the mailing list information (email address and name). **Families must sign up at the start of each school year to receive this service.** Once signed up you will receive our school newsletter, informational updates and reminders of APT and school events.

### PIV – Parent Internet Viewer

As of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Parent Internet Viewer – PIV will be ready for. Parents/guardians will be issued new ID's and PIN codes this school year. Letters have been mailed from the district office informing families of their new codes. **PIV is available to parents /guardians of 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders and allows parental access to grades, attendance, assignment scores and the ability to sign up for automated email grade reports.**

### Student Directory Opt Out

Portage Public Schools occasionally provides student directories to organizations such as Parent Teacher Organizations, colleges and libraries offering special programs to school age children, and political action committees. This information may include the student's name, address, telephone number, email address, date of birth, parent/guardian name(s), honors, activities, and awards, grade level, and dates of attendance. Parents wishing to opt a student out of directory listings should contact the main office in writing to request omission. Please note – exercising this right will exclude this information from all external requests for directory information, including P.T.O.'s. It will not impact the inclusion of information in school publications such as yearbooks, school newspapers, extra-curricular programs, etc. If you wish your student's information excluded from these publications as well, please contact the school's main office.



## Voluntary Student Accident Insurance Program



The Portage Public Schools Board of Education has again made available a voluntary student accident insurance program. Since first made available, an increasing number of parents/guardians have been taking advantage of this inexpensive policy. The district offers this program because of trends in rising family health and dental insurance costs, increased deductibles, and co-payments families are experiencing. Furthermore, in an attempt to limit the district's rising insurance costs, this program provides an alternative for claims due to injuries that may unfortunately occur on school property. This is the case for both during and after school hours.

The two plans (Comprehensive and Basic) described in the brochure sent home the first week of school have been designed to respond to diverse family insurance needs. Coverage provided can help decrease the burden of unexpected medical and dental expenses, including those left unpaid due to family insurance deductibles and co-payments. If you are interested in purchasing insurance for your child, please send the insurance enrollment form directly to the company address listed on the brochure. If you are in need of a new brochure, please contact our school office.