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Dear Sherman Community Members,

***Sherman Strong*** became our motto after we were stressed once again as a community with our security scare. We continue to work closely with the Fairfield Police Department, central office administration, our PTA and the PTA council. A security committee is being formed by the PTA council. If you would like more information about this committee, please contact our PTA president Christi McEldowney or Kristin DeWitt at kristindewitt@optonline.net

Progress Reports have been distributed and winter assessments are underway. Our Writer in Residence, Dr. Donato D’Albis will be joining us in January. His ability to inspire and motivate both enthusiastic *and* reluctant writers is legendary at Sherman School. He has been working with our third, fourth, and fifth grade students for over ten years thanks to the PTA’s generosity. We look forward to his visit once again.

As a school, our goal is to eradicate passive learning. You will perhaps see or hear your children talking about using learning scales or setting learning goals throughout the year. Maybe a conversation will be heard about self-assessment or reflection and their knowing and understanding the task or text they are working with. Our *school improvement plan* is to actively engage the students in being “with it”, instruction that is. It is part of C.A.R.E.S: cooperation, assertion (are you with it), responsibility, empathy, and self-control; the elements of our character education plan and focus at town meetings. Teachers are focusing on the questions they ask, the tasks they introduce, and the assessments that they give students that are rigorous and engaging. I will be holding a Principal’s Breakfast on Friday, February 21 at 9:15 to review our *school improvement plan* with you. I encourage you to join me for this engaging and informative event.

I want to remind you to please be courteous to our neighbors when parking and please follow the **Stop, Kiss, and Go** rules at arrival and dismissal. Things get especially tricky with snow on the ground! When everyone works together, everything runs smoothly and quickly. If you need to be somewhere and are in a hurry, set up an early dismissal instead of trying to circumvent the process. It keeps everyone safe.

Don’t forget to dress your child for our New England winters. Teachers take classes out for recess if the temperature and/or wind chill is 20 degrees or higher. Students without coats or who wear shorts or dresses without leg coverings will not be allowed outside if the temperature is below 40.

As 2013 wanes and 2014 begins I want to take the time to thank you all for the support you give our school on a daily basis. We are very fortunate to be in a community that not only values education but strives to educate the whole child. As I was cleaning my desk, I found an editorial written by Maud Purcell, a psychotherapist in Darien. She writes about bullying and how at home you can help raise a child who is a social advocate. We enact C.A.R.E.S at Sherman. Here are some of her suggestions for you at home (edited for space):

* Set limits for your kids early on. Establish consequences for unacceptable behaviors and consistently reinforce them. When kids understand the connection between actions and consequences they are much less likely to engage in unacceptable behaviors.
* Make disrespect to you or anyone else unacceptable. Once your child has lost respect for authority they are in danger of mistreating others because they believe they can.
* Don’t bully your own children, as doing so will likely lead to them either becoming a victim or bully themselves.
* Teach and model empathy. Insist that your child demonstrate compassion in all their interactions.
* Cruelty towards anyone or anything mustn’t be tolerated.
* Teach and model a confident attitude. Insist that kids stand up straight, speak clearly, and make eye contact.
* Exhibit the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors. If you are uncertain about what they are, so will your children.
* At some point almost every child is teased. Role-play effective ways for them to handle these situations and alert them to situations that may endanger their safety.
* Support but don’t coddle your kids. Give them appropriate praise but don't encourage them to believe they are more gifted than reality dictates; otherwise you set them up for a fall.
* Keep the lines of communication open. Let them know you are available to listen without judgment. This is especially helpful as children move towards adolescence.
* Don’t bury your head in the sand if you suspect a problem. Instead, take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that your child is safe and making good choices.

Enjoy the holiday season, May your family enjoy a healthy and happy New Year filled with joy!

Until next time…happy days, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!

Warmly,

Eileen