



What's Up at Westi?

Westminster Public School



March, 2024

Check out our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/WestiWildcats>



Parent Council Corner

Next Parent Council Meeting will be held virtually on April 15th at 6pm

Parent council are planning a Family Fun Night for June 19th to celebrate a great year of learning for our students and the upcoming summer holidays.

Raindate June 20th. If you want to help with the planning please contact the school. 613 345 5552

Kindergarten Registration and Open House

If you know someone who will turn 4 years old by December 31, 2024 we want to invite them to register for Kindergarten. You can do this by visiting www.MyFamilyRoom.ca or calling the school 613 345 5552



Principal Message

Goodbye February...although it was busy with lots of exciting events, we are happy to be heading into March with spring time weather. We are very busy here at Westminster with lots of engaging learning activities and fun opportunities for our students. Check out our calendar that is attached to view all the events.



What Kids Worry About at Different Ages

Kids have worries - from monsters to natural disasters. They can appear at random or may be triggered by everyday events. A child's increasing awareness of the world, who is in it, and being able to anticipate bad things happening, can all serve to increase their alarm.

Many of children's fears can be existential, meaning they are indicative of a child's growth and development as a separate being. Separation is the most impactful of all experiences and stirs up the emotional center of the brain and can create feelings of fear. As a child becomes increasingly independent, they are less dependent upon their caretakers which may foster some worry.

Common Fears and Worries

The brain is a sophisticated alarm system that is meant to be activated when separation is anticipated or real. As a child ages, the shape and form of their fears and worries can change in reflection of their increasing development. The following list contains some of the common fears and worries children may express at different ages. Many of these things are related to developmental changes and immaturity.



Strategies for Dealing with Worries

For the young child, fear is often alleviated through connection with caring adults who provide safety and reassurance. As a child ages, their increasing maturity will mean they will need to find both courage and learn to face their fears. This growth can be supported with the help of adults they trust and can count on.

Connection

When kids are worried, the best source of support will come from their closest attachments. Listening to a child's worries, acknowledging how they are feeling and coming alongside them can help to lessen their fears. Coming alongside means to listen with full attention and to reflect what you have heard instead of problem solving or negating what they have said. If a child's level of fears and worries are more persistent and chronic, then taking steps to tackle anxiety may be appropriate.

Dr Deborah MacNamara
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Courage and Bravery

Children under the age of 5 to 7 are unable to inhibit courage because of the lack of integration in their prefrontal cortex. They are only able to feel one intense emotion at a time, so their fear can overwhelm them and when pushed, they can become frustrated, resistant, or attack. When a child is 8 or younger, it may be better to use a relationship with someone they trust to walk them into things that might be new or scary. It is important not to let their fears take the lead in terms of deciding what they should or should not do. For kids who are older, helping them to express what bothers them is helpful. When they can find their words for what scares them, they are better able to articulate their desires that will help them be courageous in the face of what scares them.



Fears can also be alleviated by helping a child express their sadness about the things that worry them. This will result in a release of the fear as well as some resiliency in the face of one's worries.

Tears

Health Unit E-Bits

MyView Youth Film Festival is back. Engage youth in making a short video (5 minutes or less) on a topic of their choice for a chance to win great prizes, including cash prizes of \$500, \$750 and \$1000! Youth ages 10-24 from Eastern Ontario can enter independently or as a group. It is an exciting way to encourage youth voices and creativity. The **submission deadline is May 1st, 2024** and the red carpet Awards Ceremony will be held at the Brockville Arts Centre on June 12th. For more information, visit www.myviewfilmfest.ca or email info@myviewfilmfest.com

Self-Care over the Winter Break: Ideas for Students. March break is just around the corner! While it is a break that many look forward to, the change in routine may cause many different emotions. Here are some self-care tips and tricks that you can discuss with your children/youth: <https://smho-smso.ca/self-care-over-the-winter-break-ideas-for-students/>.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival: School begins at 9:30am each day. It is important that the students arrive at 9:25 each day to be prepared to enter the school when the bell rings (please do not come earlier than 9:25 as there is no supervision outside to keep watch over the students).

Dismissal: We dismiss kids at 3:40.

Students who arrive late and leave early are missing valuable learning time. We need kids here daily and on time. Please take a moment to review the "Attendance Matters" document for ideas on how to support regular attendance for your child if this is something you are experiencing. Please reach out to your child's teacher if you require support. I have also included a graphic on how a child is affected by not attending regularly. Check it out.

STEO

If you have questions about your child's transportation, please contact "Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario" at:

1-855-925-0022.



Fudge Fundraiser runs from Feb to March 5th. Please support our special events, field trip costs and special resources by purchasing some fudge. Orders will be in for Easter delivery.



ATTENDANCE in the early grades

Many of our youngest students miss 10 percent of the school year—about 18 days a year or just two days every month. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten, and even preK, can predict lower test scores, poor attendance and retention in later grades, especially if the problem persists for more than a year. Do you know how many young children are chronically absent in your school or community?



Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids

in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.¹



2 in 10

low-income kids miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.²



2.5 in 10

homeless kids are chronically absent.³



4 in 10

transient kids miss too much school when families move.²



Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?



64%

of kids with good attendance in K and 1st (missed 9 or fewer days both years)



49%

of kids with at-risk attendance (missed more than 9 days both years)



41%

of kids chronically absent in K or 1st (missed 18 or more days one year)



17%

of kids chronically absent in K and 1st (missed 18 or more days both years)

What We Can Do



Engage Families

Many parents and students don't realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.



Fix Transportation

The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.



Address Health Needs

Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.



Track the Right Data

Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.

These are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

¹ Chang, Hedy; Romero, Mariajose. Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades. National Center for Children in Poverty. NY, NY, September 2008.
² Chronic Absence in Utah, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.

³ Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes. Applied Survey Research. May 2011.

Weather is changing and the yard is getting messy! Please remember to encourage your children to dress appropriately and send extra clothes for the weather to ensure they stay dry and happy during their outside time. We work hard to keep kids out of the mud and puddles but somedays it is just an impossible task.

