



## Student Absences Cost Our School and Our Kids

### CALENDAR

#### January

English Learner Class 2:30-4:30 every Tuesday & Thursday, Library. Childcare provided.

11<sup>th</sup> - PTA Meeting Dinner at 6:00 (cafetorium); meeting 6:30-8 (library). Childcare provided. Small donation requested for food and childcare.

11<sup>th</sup> - African American Unity Meeting 5:00-6:00, B12. All staff and families welcome.

12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> - BUSD Meetings, 2134 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way

13<sup>th</sup> - Playground Committee Meeting 3:45 in the office. All are welcome.

17<sup>th</sup> - No School Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

18<sup>th</sup> - Dental Screening - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders; Vision Screening - K & 2<sup>nd</sup> graders

18<sup>th</sup> - Kindergarten Information Night at Washington, 7 p.m. Tell your friends and neighbors with young children!

21<sup>st</sup> - Latino Family Meeting (with crafts!), 2:30-4:00, B12

28<sup>th</sup> - No School Staff Development Day

#### February

African American History Month Look for special Monday assemblies and a school-wide event

1<sup>st</sup> - Leadership Team 5:00 - 7:00, Library. Childcare provided.

8<sup>th</sup> - PTA Meeting

15<sup>th</sup> - African American Unity Meeting

Did you know that each day a child is absent from Washington, our school loses \$33, even if the absence is excused? In just one month last fall, Washington lost over \$7,000 from excused and unexcused absences. Consistent attendance is necessary for learning, as is on-time arrival. Tardiness is awkward for the tardy child and disruptive to the class.

For these reasons, the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) has instituted the new policy described below.

Please make sure your children arrive no later than 8:10. (Arrival by 8:00 allows time for play and greetings.) Students are considered tardy if they enter the classroom after backpacks are put away and the students have begun their first task or are listening to the teacher. When students are late to school, they must get a pass from the office before going to their classroom.

If you must schedule a doctor appointment during school hours, the end of the school day is preferable as children are counted in attendance in the morning.

A legal absence requires that the parent/guardian call the school office and send a signed note when the child returns. The following are the only legal absences for students:

- Personal illness or injury.
- Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
- Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic services rendered.
- Attendance at funeral services for a

member of the immediate family.

- Student has a contagious disease (including cold, flu or head lice) or isn't immunized for a contagious disease.
- Upon written request and prior approval of the principal: appearance in court, observation of a holiday, attendance at religious retreats not to exceed four hours per semester, attendance at funeral services for someone not a member of the immediate family.

California Law and school policy require the following procedures for absences. A **first warning letter** is sent when a student has: (a) any combination of three 30-minute tardies and unexcused absences, or (b) five tardies of less than 30 minutes. A **second letter** is sent when a student is tardy one more time. The letter invites parents to a meeting to discuss problems and solutions. A **third letter** is sent if absences or tardiness continue, and paperwork is submitted to the BUSD Child Welfare and Attendance Supervisor. A **fourth letter** is sent if attendance still does not improve. This letter notifies parents that they may be prosecuted by the Alameda County District Attorney's office (which has a new full-time funded position to handle these cases).

If you have concerns about this new policy, please make an appointment with Principal Kimball.

Make your child's timely attendance a priority in your life! ■

## New 21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School Coordinator on Board

Washington has hired a new coordinator for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after-school program, after Shasta Ihorn decided to return to school. Come meet Ann Marie Callegari -- a veteran involved-parent in the Berkeley schools -- at this month's PTA meeting. She will be responsible for coordinating all after-school programs next year.

Because Washington's grant began in the fall, our program started late and we were not able to coordinate all programs together, as other schools do. Enrollment is suffering as a result.

But there are big plans in the works for next year. Part-time and full-time enrollments will be available, and there will be a single enrollment system for all programs - EDC, Sports4Kids, Youth Impact, Boys' Club, Girls' Club, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and PTA classes. Whether all programs will continue as they do presently will be up for discussion.

We need to be creative in meeting the needs of all families. Please come to the PTA meeting to begin the planning and discussion for next year! ■

## Help Fulfill Teachers' Wishes!

Many of the items on the teachers' wish lists (posted across from the office) have been fulfilled by parents or by the PTA. But many wishes remain! If you can grant one of these modest requests, check the lists and ask your child's teacher what is still needed.

## PTA Donates VHS/DVD Player

The PTA has purchased and donated a new VHS/DVD player to the school. In addition to educational uses during the day, our kids can now be entertained with DVDs or videos while their parents attend PTA meetings.

## PTA Officers

Please contact any one of the officers if you have ideas, questions or concerns.

Linda Currie - Co-chair, phone: 848-4005, email: [lindamurphydog@aol.com](mailto:lindamurphydog@aol.com)  
 Mimi Chin - Co-chair, phone: 510-548-2999, email: [mimichin@berkeley.edu](mailto:mimichin@berkeley.edu)  
 Norelia Maldonado - Secretary, phone: 510-520-7461, email: [nori\\_maldo@yahoo.com](mailto:nori_maldo@yahoo.com)  
 Linda Franco - Co-secretary, phone: 510-558-0550  
 Alison Bryant - Treasurer, phone: 510-644-8202, email: [alisonb11@juno.com](mailto:alisonb11@juno.com)

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Rader, phone: 510-845-5077, email: [nrader@iqc.org](mailto:nrader@iqc.org)  
 Ideas and information for *The Acorn* are welcome. The deadline for the next issue is Jan. 22.

## Washington Elementary

2300 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704  
 Phone: 644-6310  
 Fax: 644-7718

Rita Kimball, Principal, email: [rita\\_kimball@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:rita_kimball@berkeley.k12.ca.us)  
 Paula Shoemaker, School Secretary, email: [paula\\_shoemaker@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:paula_shoemaker@berkeley.k12.ca.us)  
 Kate Graves, Family and Community Resource Programs, 644-6939 [kate\\_graves@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:kate_graves@berkeley.k12.ca.us)

# Playground Plan Progresses

There was a strong turnout at the December 14th Washington Community Playground Design Workshop. Landscape Architect Jeff Miller and his staff introduced the Playground Improvement project and presented Washington's assets and problems through a visual slide show. (Ever notice, for example, how hard it is for the public to find the entrance to the school? How the recycling and garbage bins decorate the entrance? How the street pavement seems to extend right across into the playground?) The attendees then broke into small groups to brainstorm their ideas for improving the site. Each group marked their concepts on a

large paper map of the site, and then presented the result to the group. The hour and a half went by quickly.

Thank you to the families and staff who participated, and to all the students who created their own design ideas (which decorated the cafetorium). Jeff and staff were very impressed with our efforts and creative ideas, and will use all the drawings for information and inspiration. Jeff will return with alternate plans at a follow-up committee meeting on January 13 at 3:45 in the office. Decisions will be made. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. Sorry, childcare not available.

# Parents Pitch in To Meet PTA Fundraising Goals

Thanks to the hard work of many Washington parents and staff, we are inching towards meeting our fundraising goals for the year. Here is an update:

➤ **Cody's Bookfair** Thanks to everyone who bought books at Cody's Washington Book Fair in December. We sold a total of about \$4,300 worth of books, generating about \$900 for the Washington PTA! (This is in addition to \$233 raised at Cody's November in-store school fundraiser.)

Special thanks to coordinators Dori Johnson and Janet Guastavino and to librarian Suzy Mead for helping with the book lists and loaning us tables and bookshelves. Much appreciation to all the volunteers who set up the Book Fair, assisted students, and sold lots of books!!

This was the first year that we used Cody's Books for our Fair. Were there certain things you liked or didn't like about the books, the set up, the times open?? Let us know -- send email to [lindamurphydog@aol.com](mailto:lindamurphydog@aol.com).

➤ **Direct Donations** To date, we've received about \$2,300 from about 36 families toward our goal of \$4,500. Thank you to all those who have made donations! It's not too late to donate

if you haven't already. We are suggesting \$20 - \$50 per child attending Washington, but any amount no matter how big or small makes a difference! Make the check out to "Washington PTA" and drop it in the white PTA lockbox in the main office, or mail it to the school (address in box to left).

➤ **Escrip** The December contest generated 35 new Escrip sign-ups. Thank you Sally de Becker for coordinating this effort! If you haven't signed up yet, please do! This is a painless way to raise money for Washington! It takes just five minutes to register your ATM and credit cards, and costs nothing. Retailers then contribute money to Washington every time you use your cards. Just log on to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) (then click "welcome" and "sign up") or pick up a form at the PTA corner across from the main office, fill it out, and drop it in the PTA lockbox in the office.

These funds will be used to support swim lessons for K-3 students, scholarships for PTA-sponsored after-school classes, field trips, classroom supplies, support for Healthy Start and much more!

## Attention Parents of 5<sup>th</sup>-Graders!

Preference forms for Middle School assignments must be submitted by Friday, February 4. Middle School Open Houses will be held at 7 p.m. at King (Jan. 12), Willard (Jan. 19) and Longfellow (Jan. 26). For additional student assignment information, contact the BUSD Admissions Office: (510)644-6504; [Admissions@Berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:Admissions@Berkeley.k12.ca.us); or drop by the Admissions & Attendance Office at 1835 Allston Way.

Also, note that 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation will take place the morning of Thursday, June 16.

## MANY THANKS TO . . .

❖ **Ace Hardware** on University for donating a wheelbarrow for our garden. Way to go Lani Clemens for seeking the donation after seeing the staff wish lists in *The Acorn*!  
 ❖ **Office volunteers** Lani Clemens, Junko Ikenaga and Angelika Franco. Paula appreciates all your hard work!  
 ❖ **Spanish Language Volunteers** Lilianna Zazueta and Bea Coll for taking their personal time to translate our flyers and newsletters into Spanish. (If you can help, too, please contact one of the PTA officers.)

