



DECEMBER 2016

***"No member of a crew is praised for the rugged individuality of his rowing."
– Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Classroom Holiday Parties: Refer to District policy regarding holiday decorations – make sure staff is aware of the policy. Set clear expectations and provide guidelines for staff regarding holiday parties in the classroom. Your students shouldn't report to parents that they had a classroom party every hour or were watching videos the week of or the day before the break. Balance a positive classroom environment with providing learning opportunities every day – its important to have this discussion with staff. Make custodians aware of any extra trash barrels that may be needed in classrooms or hallways.

Staff Holiday Gathering: Having a staff holiday gathering is important for morale and team building. The get together needs to be inclusive of all staff and can be as simple as a special pot luck lunch or elaborate as a party at a local hall w/spouses. You could also do a charity project together such as a mitten tree or a gift exchange where the gifts are donated to a local organization.

Happy Holidays from the Principal: Once again, for staff morale purposes it is nice to say happy holidays in your own way to the staff. You may want to put a signed holiday card and a candy cane in each person's mailbox or provide a nice dessert for the staff to enjoy in the lounge one day. It does not have to be a major expense and it is a very nice touch to celebrate the holidays with those who work in your building. Be inclusive, don't forget the paras, secretaries and custodians. Also, it's a bonus to send a holiday note to key stakeholders: Student Council, PTA officers, Booster officers, etc.

Exams: Be sure to communicate final exam expectations to your staff regarding: students who request to take exams early, exam review and preparation, exam dates/times, etc. Advertise the exam schedule with students and families by posting on website, posters on the wall and social media. (PHD)

Exam Study Sessions: Consider working with staff to offer after school opportunities for students to get tutoring and study assistance for finals. (PHD)

Report Card Mailing: Maximize any mailings that you must do by including information on upcoming events. Include frequent reminders to parents to update changes in their contact information in case of emergency and where to attain information about school closings.

Mid-Year Student Recognition Program: Review qualifications and involve staff in selecting recipients. Calculate length of program, develop and announce assembly schedule well in advance.

Student Attendance: Inform parents by letter if their child has exceeded district limits on the number of acceptable absences. Tell them about medical excuse requirements and potential academic failure. Document the fact that you are doing this...part of YOUR evaluation is based on student attendance.



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Start Planning for Spring Testing: The spring 2017 school testing requirements haven't changes much since last spring. It is important that building administrators download the Guide to State Assessments on the MDE website at michigan.gov/mde.

2017 MME

- Test date is April 11, with the make-up on April 25. If you have students who need to make up the SAT you must order those materials on April 12 or 13.
- ACT WorkKeys test date is April 12, with the make-up date of April 26.
- M-STEP Science and Social Studies test date is April 13, with the make-up date on April 17.

PSAT 8/9 or 10

- PSAT 8/9 or PSAT 10 test dates are April 11 or April 12. The make-up dates for PSAT 8/9 or PSAT 10 are April 25 or 26.

Test Administration Training Opportunities

- On December 6, the Michigan Department of Education will provide training for administering the Spring 2017 Michigan Merit Exam. The training will be streamed on MI Streamnet (mistreamnet.org). Further details regarding the training can be found in the [November 17 MDE Spotlight](#).
- College Board requires that anyone who is administering the SAT for the first time must watch the recorded 30-minute training.

Teacher Evaluations - Mid-Year Review: The Mid-Year Review point is just around the corner. State law requires that districts conduct mid-year reviews for teachers in the first year of their probationary period and any less than effective teachers. Remember that teacher evaluations are a prohibited subject of bargaining, so you'll want to check with your Central Office about what the district procedure is for how Mid-Year Reviews should be handled.

Organize This Month's Meetings: Here are two items you should consider adding to your staff meeting agenda this month.

- **Staff Meeting Icebreaker of the Month: Classification Game** – Before splitting the room into teams of four, explain the concept of “pigeon-holing someone,” which means classifying someone as something or stereotyping someone. It should be made clear that this type of classification is subjective and unhelpfully judgmental. Instruct the participants to introduce themselves to those in their team and quickly discuss some of their likes, dislikes, etc. After the introductions, reveal to the teams that it will be their job to discover how they should classify themselves – as a team – into two or three subgroups by using criteria that contains no negative, prejudicial, or discriminatory judgments. Examples of these subgroups can include night owls and morning people, pineapple pizza lovers and sushi lovers, etc. This activity encourages colleagues to get to know each other better and enables them to collectively consider the nature of all individuals within the team.
- **New Teacher Meeting Topics of the Month and Mentor Teacher Checklist:** E-mail the mentor checklist to your mentor teachers each month to encourage conversation with untenured teacher mentees. ([PHD](#))