

# VH Highlights



**Dear Vestal Hills Family,**

My hope is that all had a wonderful Thanksgiving—spending time with family and friends, and reflecting on all we have to be thankful for in our school community. With the holidays upon us, our school will be full of holiday cheer. At Vestal Hills, we are truly a **special community** made up of students, faculty, staff, families and community members. Our focus at Vestal Hills is to provide a safe, caring and respectful environment where our students can grow and learn. We are very fortunate to receive all the support you continue to provide for your children and us. It is much appreciated.

**Safety Patrol:** Our fifth-grade Safety Patrol is doing an amazing job helping all students be safe during arrival and dismissal. Maybe you have seen them around the building or outside in the mornings and afternoons with their sashes. Our safety patrol members are very enthusiastic about their increased responsibility to help others follow the rules and especially to assist our kindergarteners get on and off the buses! They are fifth-grade SUPERSTARS!!!

Keeping VHE a healthy, happy place for your students: **Illness in the classroom** can be reduced if parents exercise good judgment. To ensure a healthy school environment and allow for their own recovery, a sick child should

remain home until they have been fever- and/or vomit-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Please be aware that this is for your own child’s well-being as well as others’.

**PLAYGROUND AND WINTER WEATHER** We have outside playground when the temperature is 20 degrees (with wind-chill) or higher. We make indoor vs. outdoor decisions immediately before each playground, as the weather changes frequently.

Please check the forecast daily for weather conditions and provide the appropriate clothing \*every day\*: winter coats, boots, snow pants, hats, gloves/mittens, extra layers, hoodies, even extra socks and pants. When there is snow, students

who have boots AND snow pants will be able to play on the woodchip/ playground equipment. If they aren’t dressed appropriately, they must play on the blacktop area, so that they do not get wet. Please label all clothing items with first and last names. Also, make sure zippers are in working order. We do have spare gloves if children forget, because we want playground to be FUN! And it’s no fun if you’re cold or wet! Thank you for your cooperation.

**Nice matters!** Vestal Hills recognizes students for their actions and their words, celebrating their achievements with the entire Vestal Hills community through our school announcements.

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## Mark Your December Calendars!

2-Dec, Mon	VHE PTA MEETING, 7 p.m.
3-Dec, Tue	Photo retakes Report cards sent home BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
6-Dec, Fri	K-5 Conference Day – 11 a.m Dismissal
8-Dec, Sun	VHE BARNES & NOBLE Fund Raiser
10-Dec, Tue	VHE Building Planning Team, 8:30-11:30
13 & 16 Dec, Fri & Mon	K-5 Conference Day – 11 a.m Dismissal
18-Dec, Tue	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
Dec 23 – Jan 1	Winter Break – NO SCHOOL
2-Jan, Thurs	School resumes

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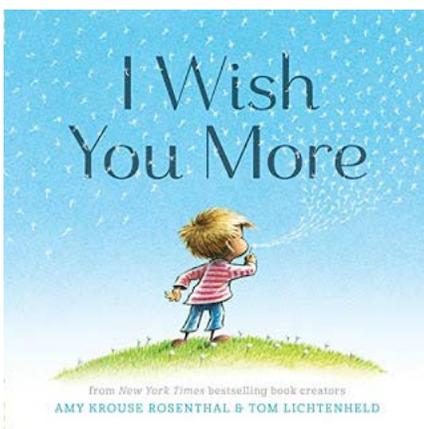
We want students to know that their **ACTIONS** and **WORDS MATTER!** (“Nice Matters” is our school motto.)



Over the last few years, I have told you about an “Ask Amy” column from the newspaper, and it’s an idea worth discussing again. The writer was asking Amy to share with her readers and families a special way to celebrate the holidays. It is called **“A Book on Every Bed.”** Here is how it works: Take a book. Wrap it. Place it on your child’s bed, so that it’s the first thing he or she sees on Christmas morning or the winter holiday that your family celebrates. That’s it. The goal is for a million American children to wake up to a wrapped book on their beds. This is not about buying books – the book you give can be passed down. “A Book on Every Bed” is an appeal to spread the love of reading from parents to children.

**Literacy starts early** – children who grow up surrounded by books and stories have a leg up in life, because children who love books grow up to be good readers and attentive listeners. And children who read for pleasure have ready access to heroes. This is a simple concept with one big goal: to raise and foster a generation of readers.

**December’s Principal Book of the Month** is **I Wish You More** by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld. Some books are about a single wish. Some books are about three wishes. Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld have combined their talents to create this exuberant, inspirational book for children of endless good wishes. Wishes for curiosity and wonder, for friendship and strength, laughter and peace. Isn’t that what we want for all of our children??



Whether celebrating life’s joyous milestones, sharing words of encouragement, or observing the wonder of everyday moments, this sweet and uplifting book is perfect for wishers of every age. I hope

you take time to read this amazing book with your child and help them to reflect on their own wishes. Enjoy!!

**Vestal Elks Promote Literacy:** Third-graders across the Vestal Central School District received their very own dictionaries, thanks to members of Vestal Elks Lodge #2508. Continuing an annual tradition—now in its 14th

year—representatives from the Vestal Elks handed out free dictionaries to our Vestal Hills third-graders. Having access to a dictionary helps students build their academic vocabulary, which is one of the instructional shifts in the NYS Education Department’s Common Core standards. A rich vocabulary is also a factor in academic success. The Elks work in conjunction with The Dictionary Project, a nonprofit organization, to assist all students in completing the school year as good writers, active readers and creative thinkers. We are so fortunate to have the Elks in our community.

**Digital Library:** This summer, Vestal students were invited to read online at the [www.myON.com](http://www.myON.com) website, sponsored by New York State Libraries. Summer is over, but students can still find hundreds of books on the site to read at home. Here’s how!

Go to [www.myON.com](http://www.myON.com) and click the login button.  
 School Name: Vestal Central School District  
 Username: veststudent  
 Password: read  
 Choose a book and start reading!

**Parking Lot Safety:** There should be NO parking in the bus lanes during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. Parking is allowed in designated areas ONLY. There should be NO parking in the lot at the end of the day, other than in designated parking spaces. It is a safety concern that some parents are parking across from the designated spots and in front of the loading dock. This hinders traffic and line of vision of both other vehicles and our children. Thank you for your attention to this very important safety issue.

**Attendance:** Please remember that **chronic absenteeism** is defined as **two or more absences per month**. Students are to be in their homerooms by 8:50 a.m. Late students will receive an unexcused tardy unless a parent or guardian signs the child in at the main office and provides a valid written excuse.

**Special Fridays:** Every Friday is a School Spirit Day—remember to wear green, gold, or Vestal Hills attire!

**Standards Based Report Cards:** Parents will receive three report cards at the elementary level again this year. The first report card will come home with students on December 3. (Parent-teacher conferences will take place over three half-days on December 6, 13 and 16.

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Students will be dismissed at 11 a.m. on Dec. 6, 13 and 16; NO LUNCHES WILL BE SERVED.)

Your student’s second report card will be sent home on March 20, and the third on the last day of school. Our report cards provide a detailed picture of your child’s progress and growth toward end-of-the-year expectations. Under each competency area, the **Grade Level Objectives** are listed. The **Scoring** system is based on a 1-4 rubric for end of the year expectations:

- 4 – Demonstrates with Mastery = Exceeds expectations
- 3 – Demonstrates Independently = Meets expectations
- 2 – Demonstrates with Support = Progressing towards Expectations
- 1 – Not Demonstrated at this Time = Area of Concern
- NA – This skill is not assessed at this time

Please have conversations with your child’s teacher if you have questions regarding your student’s individual progress and scores. As we prepare for our Parent/Teacher Conferences, we look forward to continuing to foster the positive home-school connections that are so beneficial to our student’s success.

It is my wish that all our families have a safe and enjoyable **holiday season**. What a wonderful time of the year to appreciate all the treasures we have. **Happy holidays! —Therese Mastro, Principal**

**Unity**

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 he used  
 Were books and music and art.  
 The other, a parent, worked with guiding hand  
 And a gentle loving heart.  
 Day after day the teacher toiled with touch  
 That was deft and sure,  
 While the parent labored by his side  
 And polished and smoothed it over.  
 And when at last their task was done  
 They were proud of what they had wrought.  
 For the things they had molded into the child  
 Could neither be sold nor bought,  
 And each agreed they have failed  
 If each had worked alone,  
 For behind the parent stood the school  
 And behind the teacher, the home.  
 —*Author Unknown*

# Executive Functioning Skills

The Vestal Hills Building Planning Team and staff have identified **Executive Functioning Skills** as an area of focus for our building. Each month, we focus as a building on improving one particular skill; in November, our focus was organization.

## So what are Executive Functioning Skills?

Executive function is a set of mental processes that helps us connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details and managing time and space. These are skills and processes each of us use every day to:

- Make plans
- Keep track of time and finish work on time

- Keep track of more than one thing at once
- Meaningfully include past knowledge in discussions
- Evaluate ideas and reflect on our work
- Ask for help or seek more information when we need it
- Engage in group dynamics
- Wait to speak until we’re called on
- Make mid-course corrections while thinking, reading and writing

During the month of **December**, our staff and students will learn about **working memory**.

Here are some wonderful articles that describe and discuss this important skill:

[5 Ways Kids Use Working Memory to Learn](http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C) (http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C) includes the following key points:

- Working memory helps kids hold on to information long enough to use it.
- Working memory plays an important role in concentration and in following instructions.
- Weak working memory skills can affect learning in many different subject areas, including reading and math.

[9 Terms to Know If Your Child Struggles With Executive Functioning Issues](http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C) (http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C)

covers nine key terms and phrases that doctors and other professionals use to when discussing executive functioning, while [How does a child with executive functioning issues think differently?](http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C) (http://ow.ly/nLU130mEc9C) discusses the challenges some students may face.

# HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

What can you do to help your student at home?

1. Simply **READ** with them and to them for 20 minutes every night.
2. Review **BASIC MATH** nightly to build on your child’s working knowledge of skills and concepts.
3. Check your child’s agenda every night to make sure that **HOMEWORK** is completed.
4. **COMMUNICATE** with the classroom teacher if there are any questions or concerns.

## Understanding the ABCs of Reading Levels

Parent-teacher conferences for elementary students will be held on December 2 and December 9. This is a great opportunity to meet with a teacher and learn how your child is performing in school. It is likely that you will be told what your child’s current reading level is, using the letters A-Z. Like many parents, you may be wondering what exactly this level means.

Schools often use a leveling system to track each student’s reading development. Leveling systems are also used by teachers as a tool to identify the complexity or level of difficulty of books. Vestal uses the Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient. The levels range from A-Z. Usually students begin at Level A in kindergarten and progress through the levels as their reading skills develop.

### This text gradient serves three purposes:

1. It is a helpful tool for **matching books and skills to readers**. We want children to read books at their appropriate level of difficulty.
2. It helps **guide teachers in planning instruction** that best meets the needs of each student. The teacher is looking at skill development addressed within the text, comprehension at multiple levels based on the information presented and reading fluency
3. The **grade-level designations** indicate the level at which students are expected to be reading at a particular time.

The teacher will continually assess your child’s fluency and comprehension in order to determine where your child is functioning as a young reader. Your child’s instructional level and the materials used during their guided reading instruction are based on their performance as a reader.

We refer to grade-level expectations as a benchmark. For example: The reading benchmark for the end of second grade is a Level M. Some students will progress beyond a Level M as they complete second grade, while others will fall short of the benchmark. This may be one indicator that a child needs additional reading support to reach grade level expectations.

**Please remember that your child is a reader—not a letter.** The reading-level letter is purely an indicator for instruction. It identifies skills to address and text complexity to use within the instruction, and multiple levels may be used based on the instructional focus of the lessons designed.

**Why Can't I Skip My 20 Minutes of Reading Tonight?**

Student "A" reads 20 minutes each day	Student "B" reads 5 minutes each day	Student "C" reads 1 minute each day
3600 minutes in a school year	900 minutes in a school year	180 minutes in a school year
<b>1,800,000 words</b>	<b>282,000 words</b>	<b>8,000 words</b>
		
90 <sup>th</sup> percentile	50 <sup>th</sup> percentile	10 <sup>th</sup> percentile

By the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade Student "A" will have read the equivalent of 60 whole school days. Student "B" will have read only 12 school days. Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary? Which student would you expect to be more successful in school...and in life?  
(Nagy & Herman, 1987)

VHE is joining with Vestal High School this year to collect Toys for Tots! Please bring in new, unwrapped toys now through December



19 to the Vestal Hills collection barrel. They will be distributed to less-fortunate children during the holiday season. Thank you!

## Time for Kindness

# PLAY IT UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

It's time for good old-fashioned play! Play allows children to use their **creativity** while developing their **imagination**, **dexterity**, and **physical, cognitive**, and **emotional strength**. Through play children learn at a very early age to engage and interact in the world around them. **Play is a cherished part of childhood**. By finding the right balance between work and play, children will grow up happier, better adjusted, and more prepared to conquer the world.



## OUTDOOR PLAY!

- Design a scavenger hunt
- Play tag
- Play at a local playground
- Build a fort
- Draw a four-square or hopscotch court with chalk and play
- Build a snowman or a snow fort
- Practice jumping rope
- Practice a sport with friends and family
- Play hide and seek
- Go for a hike and explore local trails
- Rake your leaves into a giant pile
- Climb a tree
- Go fishing
- Ride your bike
- Play fetch with your dog

## HERE'S HOW:

1. Each day, **PLAY IT UP** indoors or outdoors.
2. Use the indoor or outdoor activities listed or create your own fitness fun.
3. Participate in one or more activities for at least one hour throughout each day.
4. Write down your chosen activities on the calendar provided!



## INDOOR PLAY!

- Make your own slime
- Play Blind Man's Bluff
- Play a card or board game
- Play hide and seek
- Play charades
- Build an indoor obstacle course
- Build a structure out of cardboard
- Design and play your own "Minute to Win It" games
- Make a bowling alley with home-made pins
- Build a blanket and pillow fort
- Create your own workout
- Create an indoor treasure hunt for family
- Bake a holiday treat with a parent
- Make paper airplanes and fly them
- Put on a play with your family
- Draw and color
- Go indoor rock climbing

**PLAY**  
is the work of childhood  
Mr. Rogers

[RETURN TO MS. HARVEY](#)

# PLAY IT UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	<p><b>PLAY IT UP</b> throughout the month of December!            At the end of the month, add up the total number of days completed, and have a parent sign the bottom of the calendar. Return it to your teacher for an award certificate and shoe token.</p>			

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Days Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# December

**Where Will Your Wings Take You???**

## VESTAL HILLS ELEMENTARY

**2019**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Day 2 2 PTA Mtg 7PM	Day 3 3 1-3 Puppet Show  Photo Retakes Report Cards Go Home	Day 4 4 RTI Mtg	Day 5 5 Kelso 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade Kdg Puppet Show  MP Planning Mtg-8AM	Day 6 6 Parent Conference- 10:45AM Dismissal	7
8	Day 1 9 Susanne Bloom Assembly	Day 2 10  BPT 8:30AM	Day 3 11 Kelso- Schmidt/Selby 3rd Gr Step It Up  Staff Collaboration 8AM	Day 4 12 Kelso- Finch/Barney  RTI Mtg	Day 5 13 Parent Conference- 10:45AM Dismissal  Buddy Day Para Mtg-8:15Am	14
15	Day 6 16 Parent Conference- 10:45AM Dismissal	Day 1 17 4th Gr Step It Up  Safety Team Mtg 8AM  BOE mtg 7PM	Day 2 18	Day 3 19 5th Gr Step It Up	Day 4 20  Holiday Awards & Celebration	21
22	<b>Winter Break – NO SCHOOL</b>					

**Team Time Suggestions:** THINK before you speak, Impulse Control, Metacognitions

**Overarching Theme:** Inclusion, Friendship

**Book of the Month:** *I Wish You More* – Amy Krouse Rosenthal