

Dear Plainville Families,

December 21st marks the beginning of the Winter Solstice, bringing us the shortest day of the calendar year, with fewer than 9 hours of daylight coming our way. Growing up, my father would always bemoan “the shortest day of the year,” and we now know that longer periods of darkness can sometimes have a detrimental effect on our feelings and outlook. However, there are a number of holidays that fall within (or close to) this period of darker days that provide a short reprieve as families engage in deeply rooted and light-filled traditions.

Holidays that share the commonality of light, and that are celebrated by some of our Plainville families include:

~Diwali: Celebration of the Indian Festival of Lights (October 24, 2022)

~Chanukah: The Festival Lights celebrated by Jewish families (December 18, 2022)

~Christmas: Celebrated by Christians, with light offered through yule logs, candles, and Christmas lights (December 25, 2022)

~Kwanzaa: Celebration of African roots, with candles representing 7 principles of Kwanzaa (December 26, 2022)

~Lunar New Year: Asian celebration of the new moon (January 22, 2023)

~Ramadan: Celebrated by Muslims, commemorating the arrival of the new moon (March 22, 2023)

This abbreviated list is not intended to provide in-depth information about each holiday; it simply recognizes the fact that Plainville’s students represent a diversity of backgrounds and beliefs, and that in many cases, these divergent beliefs converge around the theme of light. This collection of holidays addresses ideas of new birth, new beginnings, hope, and faith in the earth’s gifts.

As I think about the work in our schools, I have seen an overwhelming amount of light in just the first half of the school year. I think about the day I observed a student who was having a tough morning; he was escorted to class with great care by a teacher and by several friends, all trying their hardest to brighten his path. I think about opportunities for charitable giving promoted by both schools, with their lobbies overflowing with donated cold weather gear and collections of all kinds for those in need. I think about weekly school calendars full of spirit days, special events, and chances for students to express themselves academically, socially, artistically, musically, and through the numerous opportunities they have for movement throughout their days. I think about this past Friday afternoon, when I visited a kindergarten class that spontaneously erupted into rounds of Ring-Around-The-Rosie, delighting their teachers who looked on as their students took the lead to grasp hands, sing, and fill the room with laughter.

These are the moments of light that I've seen repeatedly in the Plainville Public Schools, and I anticipate that these rays of brightness will keep us going through the upcoming New England winter!

Health and Wellness Updates:

~Please take the time to read the [Family Wellness Information newsletter](#) from Wellness Director Dot Pearl. It is exceptionally well done, and includes many helpful links and resources on a variety of topics.

~[Flu Facts Information](#)

~Covid Tests: Covid-19 tests will be sent home with students early this week (just as we did prior to the Thanksgiving holiday). Please use them at your discretion over the holidays; we recommend testing students at home on January 2nd, prior to the reopening of schools on January 3rd. Also, please remember that while you may see tests with expired dates, the state has informed us that these dates have been extended.

As you think about the week ahead, please note that December 22nd is the last day of school prior to vacation, which begins on Friday, December 23rd. School resumes on Tuesday, January 3rd.

It has been my pleasure to become part of the Plainville community in 2022, and I am eager to start 2023 with all of you right here on Messenger Street. As Nelson Mandela once said, when "we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same." I believe that I have been immersed in Plainville's shining light, and I look forward to the brightness ahead!

Truly,

Jennifer Parson