

Bear Facts

..a guide to
Howard's
school-wide
activities,
terms, and
events.

Dear Parents and Friends,

We are honored you have chosen to send your child to Howard Early Childhood Center, the school where *the tradition of excellence begins* in the Alamo Heights Independent School District.

This booklet is intended to provide you with information about the many school-wide events and activities at Howard School. Many of these fun-filled activities are unique to Howard and we hope you will enjoy them as much as your child and the teachers and staff at Howard do.

Your child's classroom participates in many more ac-

Some general info...

COLOR DAYS

During the first eight weeks of school, students at Howard will learn a song about each color. At the end of the week every child, teacher, and staff member are encouraged to wear something with that color. Be creative! If you do not have an item that color, a paper shape with the color of the week pinned on your child's shirt or pants would be perfect.

LUNCH VISITS

After the first two weeks of school, parents and grandparents are encouraged to visit during the lunch period. The first two weeks allows the children time to adjust to the lunch routine and schedule. Keep in mind that the lunch period provides children with an excellent opportunity to interact with their peers so limit your visits to once or twice a week. This will make your visit during lunch all the more special.

HOWARD TOTE BAG

You are encouraged to purchase and use a Howard Tote Bag. The bag is sold by our PTO before school starts and at the “Meet the Teacher” sessions. (See below.) These totes are easier for the children (*and the teachers*) to use to take notes, folders, and other items to and from school and home.

Optional: Have your child’s name monogrammed on the tote. We encourage you to monogram your child’s first name only.

HIGH SCHOOL HELPERS

Each year a number of Alamo Heights High School students choose to be assigned to Howard as teaching assistants as part of a Child Development class they take at the high school. They are supervised by a high school teacher and are at Howard four days out of the school week. Many choose to spend extra time at Howard at special events or activities.

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is served at Howard from 7:45—8:15. Please check the Howard Handbook for current prices. If you want your child to have breakfast at school, he or she should arrive early enough to eat breakfast and get to the classroom by 8:15.

SECURITY

To ensure the safety of our staff and students, our building has a door locking system which necessitates cooperation from parents and others visiting our school after the start of the school day. Parents and others visiting our campus are to enter the building using the doors near the office on the Lorenz Street side of the school. All other doors will be locked or will automatically lock after the school day begins. Teachers and staff members are not authorized to open any locked doors for parents or visitors. You are also reminded to sign in and obtain a Visitor's Pass from the office when visiting our school after the school day begins.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

While we recognize birthdays are special occasions for young children and their families, we like to keep birthday celebrations at school simple. Parents may choose to have lunch with their child on their special day or send cookies, cupcakes, or other treats. Just be sure to check with the classroom teacher for the best time and the best way to celebrate the big day. If you want us to distribute invitations to birthday parties outside of the school day, be sure you have an invitation for all of your child's classmates.

Optional: You can honor your child's special day by participating in Howie's Birthday Book Club. See the librarian for details.

PRIME TIME

The YMCA offers after school childcare and uses our school facilities. During hot weather, Prime Time is held in the cafeteria. At other times of the year, it is held in the gym.

WELCOME WEDNESDAY

Howard has a great reputation in the city and because of our unique instructional arrangement, we often receive requests from university students, teachers from other districts and private schools, and prospective parents who want to visit our school when it is in session. We set aside each Wednesday for the visits.

HOWARD HEB

Several years ago, teachers applied for and received a grant from the Alamo Heights School Foundation and HEB and created a pretend HEB store. Howard HEB is a wonderful learning environment for children and the students enjoy playing and learning in our HEB store.

COMPUTER LAB

Howard has a computer lab and classes schedule a 30-45 period each week to work and learn in the lab. Parents are encouraged to volunteer during this time.

AUGUST

MEET THE TEACHER

In early August or about two weeks before school starts you should receive a packet of information with a letter telling you who your child's teacher will be for kindergarten. Your child will have an opportunity to meet his or her teacher and find the location of the classroom. Complete the information included in the packet and return it when you bring your child to the "Meet the Teacher" session. Please make every effort to attend this "Meet the Teacher" session.

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

After school has been in session for about two weeks, you will be invited to a very important Back to School meeting. At this meeting, you will learn about the curriculum, daily schedule, classroom procedures, and more. You will have an opportunity to sign up for volunteer positions. Childcare is provided for children ages 4-12 so that parents can attend this informative session. A brief meeting is held in the cafeteria before parents are dismissed to the classrooms.

HOWARD RAFFLE

This is the major fundraiser for Howard School and PTO parents begin work on it months before school begins. Funds raised from this raffle are used to purchase curriculum and enrichment materials, fund playground improvements, and other important efforts. Donations are accepted from businesses, parents, and other individuals. You can help in by donating items for the raffle or by selling and purchasing tickets. The drawing is usually held in October.

SEPTEMBER

In September, most teachers begin using volunteers and there are many ways you can help throughout the school year. Individuals who volunteer must complete a *Criminal Background Check* form available online or in our school office. This process takes several days especially at the beginning of the school year.

Here are a few of the ways you can help....

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Beginning of the Year Helpers — Many volunteers are needed at the beginning of the year to open car doors, escort children to their classrooms, help in the cafeteria during lunch, etc. Contact the PTO to see how you can help.

Homeroom Parents—Parents are encouraged to sign up to help during class parties and to assist the teacher with special classroom activities. A meeting is held in September to review guidelines for class parties. Homeroom parents also act as the point of contact to facilitate communication with other parents in the classroom.

Library Volunteers — Children go to the library with their class once a week at a regularly scheduled day and time. Volunteers are needed to read selected books to the class during part of the time the class spends in the library.

Cafeteria/Lunch Room Volunteers — Lunch in our school cafeteria is a new experience for most of our students. Students need help opening milk cartons, yogurt containers, cereal boxes, etc. They also enjoy talking to and getting to know other adults. Teaching assistants are on duty but extra help in the cafeteria is always needed throughout the year.

Special Event Volunteers — There are many activities throughout the year when extra help is needed. A few of the events are listed on the following pages. Some of the events include *Picture Day, Food Drives, Special Visitors, etc.* Call the school if you ever have a few extra minutes. We assure you there will be some way you can help!

OCTOBER

FIRE SAFETY

October is Fire Safety Month. Children enjoy fire safety lessons and demonstrations conducted by firefighters from the Alamo Heights Fire Department during the month.

PICTURE DAY

Each child's picture is taken and purchase choices are given to parents. A percentage of the sales is given to our school and used to supplement the purchase of instructional materials and supplies.

HALLOWEEN/FALL ACTIVITIES

Classrooms celebrate this event in a variety of ways. Teachers enlist the help of parent volunteers to plan and facilitate the day's activities.

NOVEMBER

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

During a week in October (and again in the Spring) teachers schedule a time to conference with parents about their child's academic progress and social development. Students are dismissed one hour early for these conferences.

Please note: A report card/checklist is not given to parents until the second nine-week period.

POW WOW

Howard students celebrate Native Americans and Thanksgiving with a culminating event which includes making costumes and participating in authentic games. Your child will need to provide a daddy-size (LARGE) plain white t-shirt for the costume. Teachers may also ask for additional items for this activity.

FOOD DRIVE

As we approach the holiday season, Howard students learn about generosity and compassion. To connect the concept with a meaningful experience, Howard students collect canned and dry goods to donate to the St. Anthony de Padua food pantry. Classes often walk to the church located one block from our school to personally make the donation.

DECEMBER

AFTER SCHOOL ENRICHMENT

Parents of Howard students are given the opportunity to register for a wide variety of afternoon enrichment experiences. The classes are held after school at Howard for four days one week December, February, and April (Monday through Thursday). Parents are responsible for registration including fees and transportation. Registration is on a first-come-first-serve basis and classes fill quickly so get your registration and fees in early.

POINSETTIA SALES

You will have a hard time finding prettier poinsettias than the ones sold by the Howard PTO. Beautify your home, office, or give these beautiful plants away as a gift. Delivery of plants is in December but look for order forms in November. Pick-up location is at Howard School

HOLIDAY PARTIES

The holiday season at Howard is a fun time for students, teachers, and parents. Parents are solicited to coordinate with the teacher to provide activities, crafts, and refreshments to celebrate and honor this season.

JANUARY

KINDERGARTEN PREVIEW

An opportunity to learn about the kindergarten program is offered to prospective parents through the Howard Kindergarten Preview sessions. This year, two sessions will be held in January and two sessions will be held in February. At these sessions, future kindergarten students are assigned to a kindergarten teacher's classroom where they will learn what kindergarten at Howard. While students are in the classrooms, parents will attend an informative session about our school and its programs. The session culminates with a Howie Hunt to familiarize the children and parents with the school facility. Be sure to tell your neighbors and friends about this program. All prospective families are encouraged to sign up for one of these sessions.

FEBRUARY

100th DAY

Howard students celebrate the 100th day of school with a variety of activities which may include:

- Bringing in a collection of 100 items from home
- Making a 100th day snack at school
- Numerous math activities and centers to reinforce counting to 100.

You may be asked to send items to school for the activities scheduled for the day. It is also a great time to volunteer to help in the classroom.

CLASS GROUP PHOTO

A photographer comes once a year to take a photo of each class. Watch your child's calendar for which day the class picture will be taken in order to assure they attend that day. A proof will be sent home with pricing information. This class photo becomes a great memento of the kindergarten year.

VALENTINE'S DAY

This day is celebrated with a party and a card exchange. Most teachers request that students prepare cards at home for each child in the class. Many teachers also ask parents to mail one Valentine card to their child at school. Cards will be delivered throughout the day by a special postal worker. You may be asked to help with games and activities at the party or provide food or party supplies.

BOOK FAIR/TEXAS TEA ROOM

A Book Fair is sponsored by PTO and held in the library from 8:00—2:00 each day for one week. Parents are invited to drop in and take their child to the book fair. In conjunction with the book fair, each class is assigned a special day to eat lunch in the front foyer which is decorated in a Texas theme. There is no special menu for lunch during this week. Following lunch, parents and children visit the book fair. If parents are unable to attend, they can send money and teachers will help children select a book.

MARCH

RODEO

Classes highlight the study of Texas through a variety of activities that may include the following: ranch-themed outdoor games, activities, and fixin' vittles. Wearing western attire is encouraged and your child may be asked to make a "stick horse" at home to use at the rodeo. Parents may be invited to participate by helping with games and activities and/or rustling' up supplies.

SPRING BREAK

Spring Break is held in March each year and it is a great time to relax, rest, and rejuvenate in preparation for the remainder of the year!

APRIL

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Spring conferences and early dismissal are one week usually held in early April. (*See November.*)

SPRING PHOTO

A photographer comes to Howard to take a Spring photo of your child. Pictures arrive in time for Mother's Day.

TRANSITION TO FIRST GRADE

Activities to facilitate the transition from Howard to first grade may begin as early as April. Watch your child's calendar for information about meetings and other activities.

MINI-FIESTA

A day-time, age-appropriate version of NIOSA is held during this special time of year. Howard's Mini-Fiesta is held from 9-11 a.m. on Thursday of Fiesta Week. This outdoor fiesta is enjoyed by students, parents, and teachers and includes booths of activities, food, and fun. PTO with the help of many parent volunteers and teachers and staff puts on this event.

MAY/JUNE

VISITS TO FIRST GRADE

Teachers accompany the students on a to their first grade campus one day in May. Parents are invited to meet their children at the receiving campus. Students are given a tour of the first grade classroom and building. Parents should watch for meetings held for parents of entering first graders held by the elementary school campuses.

END OF YEAR ACTIVITIES

The end of year is celebrated through a variety of activities that may include: Splash Day, Camp Day, student performances, special field trips, and other fun activities. You will receive information about these activities from your child's teacher.

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