

**From the Principal's Pen
January 2022**

Submitted by: Jennifer McGee, Principal of Atwood Primary School



Happy New Year from Atwood's Peaceful Village!

My son was in the Dunkin' Donuts drive-thru the other day. He was looking forward to a steaming, hot cup of coffee, but apparently so were dozens of others! An incredibly long line developed pretty quickly, so he found himself sandwiched in...grid-locked. He couldn't move forward and he couldn't move backwards. Someone at the window had a very large and time consuming order, so the wait was long.

The man in the car in front of my son's car grew very impatient. He rolled down his window and started screaming obscenities at the people in the line. He kept hollering for them to get moving, but no one had anywhere they could go.

This infuriated him even more, so he started hollering louder and he began swearing a string of horrific and colorful words! My son noticed right away that the cars all around him had little children, and parents were looking worried. Finally, one mother opened her car door, and got out. She said as politely as possible, "Sir, please stop. I have my children in the car and you are scaring them."

So, instead of swearing, he decided to bear down on his horn and blare his horn for all in the line to deal with. Well, apparently this was the last straw for another man in his car and he got out of his car...clearly furious. He headed straight toward the car with the horn blaring, and the man in that car quickly rolled up his window, locked his door and drove right over the grass and the median strip. The angry man jumped back and his car and followed in hot pursuit!

I don't know how the story ended. I don't know if the one car "caught" the other, and if it did, what he did when he caught him. All I know is that focusing on "peace" and "peaceful" resolutions seem like the right focus for the 2021-22 school year. People truly seem to be at the end of their ropes!

We are continuing to work on the simple exercise of "breathing"....the children are learning all different methods during stressful moments to take three deep breaths. The staff here had The

Maine Resilience Network come and work with us and show us some child-friendly resources to teach children coping strategies. It is never too soon and it is never too late to begin practicing methods to calm yourself and to help yourself over hurdles: anger, anxiety, sadness, frustration, impatience (for example in a Dunkin' Donuts line).

We have a book we are referencing called: ***Alphabreaths by Christopher Willard and Daniel Rechtschaffen*** . Below, I offer you some examples of the types of breathing exercises children are learning.

"C is Cake Breath. Breathe in as you imagine a birthday cake. Breathe out as you imagine blowing out the candles..."

"F is Flower Breath. Breathe in and imagine you are smelling your favorite flower. Breathe out and imagine you are blowing the seeds of a dandelion..."

Children can also breathe using their five fingers as a guide...up is breathe in, and down the slope is breathe out as they trace their little hands.



The reason I am dedicating the first Pen of the New Year to breathing, is because it is simple, it is effortless and it is impactful in helping us calm ourselves and sort through our challenges. Just breathe. And if you are aware of this simple strategy, you can help your children use these strategies to become resilient and peaceful adults.

2020 was challenging. 2021 was even more challenging. Maybe in 2022, we can stay calm and focus on peacefully solving all of the challenges we are facing. Your children are beginning to learn the importance of peaceful problem solving here at Atwood Primary School.

And...if you happen to stop at Dunkin' and the line is long...try an N for Ninja Breath. Pretend you are a ninja. Breathe in and out as silently and slowly as you can. You'll get your coffee.

Happy Peaceful New Year,

Jenny McGee, Principal of Atwood Primary School

Dates to Note:
Monday, January 3: Return to School!

Monday, January 17: No School....Martin Luther King Day
Monday, January 24: No School....full day in-service day