



The Bells Mill Beacon

November 2010

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PTA President's Message by Ali Weitzman

It is always so exciting to start a new school year. Our PTA has been working extra hard to make sure all of our Back to School activities were a huge success. I hope everyone enjoyed our first ever community picnic. Becoming a very tight knit community is a key goal of the PTA this year and I know the picnic was a fantastic first step. In order to keep the community spirit alive, our first PTA meeting on October 5 at 7:15pm was a 20 minute meeting proceeded by a 30 - 40

minute coffee & dessert. It was exciting for everyone to have a chance to reach out to someone new and bring a delicious snack to share.

As I mentioned at back to school night, **the PTA this year is focusing on three major initiatives. They are:**

1. Volunteering - We are encouraging each parent, including the Dads, to volunteer for at least 1 thing this school

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Principal's Message by Jerri Oglesby

It is hard to believe that we have completed the first marking period. The year is certainly flying by. Thanks to all of our families for your support in making this one of our best years yet at Bells Mill. Our school family has many reasons to feel very proud.

Parent conferences are scheduled on November 11 and 12. It is important that you take the opportunity to come in and discuss your child's individual progress to date. If you have not made an appointment with your child's teacher, please call the school today and set up a convenient time. To get the most out of a conference, come prepared. The parent-teacher conference provides a unique opportunity to collaborate with a key partner in your child's education- his or her teacher. The following are suggestions for getting the most out of the parent-teacher conference.

Be there, and be on time. Attending the conference may be one of the most important things you do for your child this school year. Please keep in mind that the teacher has to meet with a lot of parents, and the conferences are usually on a tight schedule. Therefore, being punctual or even early will maximize your discussion time.

Ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Discuss the expectations the teacher has for your child, as well as what observations the teacher has made and whether there have been any

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Principals Message (continued from page 1)

surprises with your child's performance or behavior. Ask your child how he/she feels about school. Take the time to look over your child's schoolwork and bring any with you that raise questions or concerns. Also bring some specific questions that you'd like to ask the teacher. These might include:

Is my child performing at, below, or above grade level in basic skills? Math? Reading?

Does my child turn in homework regularly?

What are my child's strengths and weaknesses? (subjects, talents, social skills)

Does my child get along well with classmates?

Does my child need special help in academics or socialization skills?

What help is available?

What can I do to support my child's learning at home and school?

Discuss specific strengths and weaknesses. By getting details about what your child is doing well in the classroom, you are in a better position to offer praise and reinforce those strengths at home. Find out what topics or tasks your child struggles with, what sorts of things he or she is reluctant to do and, most importantly, what specific strategies you can try at home to help.

Review your child's report card and work with your child to set personal goals. Remember to praise your child's efforts and have the children share with you how they feel about their learning and progress. Setting goals helps focus children on their own growth and improvement in areas where they might be having some trouble as well as to begin taking ownership for their learning. It is not recommended that you set a goal to get a specific grade in a subject, but try to focus on an academic area your child might be having trouble with. An example might be to learn the basic facts or particular sets of times tables. Then, monitor throughout the remainder of the marking period how your child feels about his or her progress towards that goal.

As we approach the holiday season, I know that the staff and I are thinking about all we have to give thanks for. This is a time to reflect on the blessings in our life and to appreciate those we hold dear. The staff and I are very appreciative and thankful to be part of a supportive, loving and caring community. I know that many families want to show their gratitude by giving gifts to staff members. One way you can recognize the outstanding efforts of your child's teacher is to make a donation in their honor to the Kay Holliday Bear Hug Fund. This account was established in loving memory of Dr. Kay Holliday, former principal of Bells Mill Elementary. It is used to support the children and families at Bells Mill. Over the years, we have sent children to camp, purchased medicine, provided glasses, clothing and other critical needs of our students. We send a card to the staff member recognizing your gift and send you a receipt for your tax deductible donation. Last year we created the Mama Sharon Fund. This was established to honor the memory of our beloved Mrs. Sharon Davis and her love of teaching math to the children of Bells Mill. This fund provides the opportunity to support students who need help with math, to provide instructional materials and training for teachers. This is a wonderful way to recognize a staff member and also give to the Bells Mill children. If you choose to honor a staff member in this manner, send your donation to the attention of Ms. DeMarino in the front office.

We love your children and are committed to the academic and social success of each child. The staff and I wish all of our families a very happy holiday season and look forward to a continued successful school year. We need your support and look forward to your involvement in the education of your children.

PTA presidents message (continued from page 1)

year. This can be something you do from home, at the school, or on the weekends. In fact, we are looking for a few parents to play ball with the kids during recess, volunteer at Club Bells Mill (wear your costume for October's Halloween bash) and even become our webmaster. You can find the full list of volunteer activities on our website. Can't find one that is a fit? Call me and I am happy to help.

2. Communication – As most of you are aware, the PTA has gone green this year. This means the PTA will not be sending paper flyers will be coming home in your children's backpacks. Instead all of the information you need will be available in Bear Mail or on the PTA website – bellsmill.org. There is a "Print your Flyers" section so that you can download any needed forms and print them at home. Please sign up for: Bear Mail, Friend us on Facebook, Follow Mrs. O on twitter and favorite place the PTA website.

3. Money – The first question you may ask yourself is, "where does the money go?!" The money the PTA raises is all given back to the students, teachers and community. Did you know the PTA is picking up the cost of the after school activity bus that the county can no longer afford? And that we are turning the gym into a haunted house for the October 23rd club bells mill! We are reimbursing the teachers for the supplies they buy for our children with money from their own pockets. And, our community events are subsidized by the PTA including Movie night, Bingo Night, Bells Mill Bash. We do

all this and much, much more. We are hoping to make fundraising as simple as possible for our community and will be doing 4 main fundraisers in the fall:

1. Discount Cards – These are only \$10 and give you discounts to all sorts of local merchants including Subway, Ledo's, Robek's & Broadway pizza (YUM!)

2. Sally Foster – Look out for information about Sally foster coming soon! There are all sorts of goodies available this year.

3. Read A Thon – This is our annual capital campaign and is the major source of the funds we need in order to support our school. We are looking to make at least \$200 per family this year. Children can read and participate, or feel free to just donate.

4. Membership – I encourage each of you to join the PTA as a way of becoming an active participant in your child's education.

Also, don't forget there are other ways to support the school including Giant Bucks, Harris Teeter and Box top that you can just cut off of everyday groceries and turn in to school in the box in the front hallway!

Have a fantastic fall!
Ali Weitzman
www.bellmill.org



ESOL by Susan Thomson

The Bells Mill ESOL students have had a busy first quarter.

Kindergarten ESOL students have been writing sentences about themselves and their families. They have also made two class graphs to share data about their birthdays and the activities they like to do with their families.

The first graders have read and discussed many of David Shannon's books. David Shannon is an author/illustrator. They have also been retelling other stories they have read, such as *One Afternoon*, by Yumi Heo.

The second and third graders took inspiration from the paintings of Norman Rockwell. They have been writing personal narratives.

The fourth and fifth grade ESOL students spent one class period in a kindergarten classroom observing the children in center time. They have been using their notes to write descriptive pieces about kindergarten life.

I am enjoying working with the wonderful ESOL students at Bells Mill.

The Counselor's Corner by Sarah Kanter

It has been an exciting few months in this corner. In September, I visited each classroom to introduce myself and explain my job to all the students at school. Our students learned when it is appropriate to see me and when they can work problems out on their own with strategies they have learned through the years. I also met with the new students at school in the "**New Students**" lunch bunches where we talked about what it's like being new. Some of our returning students were guests at these lunches and shared advice on how to make friends and get to know everyone at Bells Mill.

October was a busy month as well. I met with all the classes and spoke about leading healthy lives for Red Ribbon Week. Students celebrated their healthy choices such as playing a sport, packing a healthy lunch, and limiting their "screen time" at home. The month culminated in Red Ribbon Week where students and staff proudly wore red ribbons as a pledge to stay healthy.

Two programs that started in October are "**Best Buddies**" and "**Ambassadors**". Best Buddies is a program where students in the General Education program pair up with students in the Autism program at recess and in their classroom. It is a wonderful opportunity for the students who participate. Students in fourth grade had a chance to sign up to be Ambassadors and help out at our school in many different ways. Some of their jobs are Headstart Ambassadors, Art Ambassadors, and Bus Buddies. The fourth graders are very excited to serve as Ambassadors at school and the school greatly benefits from their help.

Next month, I will be meeting with some of our students in the "**Banana Splits**" lunch group where we will learn about changing families and different family structures. I will also continue meeting with all classes for monthly guidance lessons. As we learn, work, and play together, we will remember to use the **Bells Mill Six Star Expectations** and treat each other with kindness and respect.

Art Update by Tonya Kirby

I am looking forward to another great year with our Bells Mill artists!

Kindergarten and 1st grade students are creating artwork from the new MCPS Integrated Curriculum. They are learning to organize shapes, lines, textures, and colors.

2nd grade through 5th grade have kicked off the year by creating portraits!

2nd grade students drew people in the Bells Mill community through observation.

3rd grade students drew group portraits of friends and family.

4th grade students collaged themselves expressing an emotion.

5th grade students have painted themselves into a personal narrative.



Head Start and students with autism are experimenting with materials and creating artwork that supports the seasonal calendar.

We are also excited to welcome Wendy Abid to the art program, Mrs. Abid teaches one 1st grade class and one 4th grade on Monday mornings.

Parents can support students interest in art by displaying student artwork at home, and asking the students to describe their artwork.

Music Notes by Valerie Sampogna

Bells Mill students have been having a blast (and learning lots!) in general music so far this year!

The vision for general music is for every student to build their musical knowledge and skills so that they can appreciate and enjoy music through singing, dancing, and playing instruments.

Below you will find the musical objectives that each grade has focused on during the first marking period:

Kindergarten:

Identifying classroom instru-

ments by sight and sound; Following musical cues in various song games; Keeping the steady beat while listening to music

First Grade:

Following musical cues in various song games; Identifying same and different sections heard in music

Second Grade:

Identifying the four families of instruments in the orchestra by sight and sound; Singing by themselves and with others in tune with attention to proper vocal technique.

Third Grade:

Conducting music with meter 2/4; Labeling song forms as cumulative or verse/refrain

Fourth grade:

Conducting music with meters 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4; Identifying contrasting and repeating phrases in music aurally and visually.

Fifth grade:

Performing choral accompaniments using chords I and V on Orff instruments. Identify theme and variation as a musical form.



Nurse Notes by Deborah Stapleton, RN, BSN, SHCN

Lead forms:

Please make sure you return your completed lead form if you are in K, 1, or Special Education. If you have any questions regarding this form please contact the Health Room. You will only receive a form if we do not have one on file.

Lice:

"It's Nice to Tell That You Have Lice", it does help decrease the spread of lice. We are always available in the Health Room to assist you in identifying lice and answering questions regarding this pesky louse. Please continue to check your child's hair regularly throughout the school year.

What Activities are Age Appropriate for Your Child?

Fitness levels change as children grow. Learn what activities are age appropriate for your child as they develop.

Fitness is an important part in everyone's life, from the very young to the very old. Fitness can begin as soon as your child can walk, but activities should be limited to his or her developmental capabilities. An important rule to remember is that fitness should always be fun and your child should never be forced to participate in or do something that isn't fun.

Toddlers use play and exploring as their form of fitness. Play can help toddlers learn how things work in the world around them and help them develop curiosity about their environment. Unstructured play is best for toddlers, including activities such as:

- * Running
- * Swinging
- * Playing in the park
- * Playing with other children around the same age

As children grow and develop,

they can participate in more fitness-related activities. For example, 4 and 5-year-olds can usually ride their bikes on training wheels. Remember, not all children develop at the same age, so if your child cannot ride a bike, don't push him or compare him to other children.

Children six years and older can generally participate in a large number of sports, both organized and noncompetitive activities. Examples include:

- * Soccer
- * Swimming
- * Gymnastics
- * Basketball
- * Football
- * Softball/baseball
- * Hockey

Many communities have youth leagues that enroll kids in organized sports at a young age. As children get older, they can participate and compete in those sports on their school team.

Media Center News by Joanne Floyd

Mrs. Floyd is still excited to be working in our beautiful media center! Each class has come in for an orientation lesson.



Our **Head Start students, kindergartners and first graders** are learning library procedures and appropriate book care. In **grades, 2-5** we are focusing on becoming more independent in the library. The students have learned how to use the Patrons' Catalog to search for the books

they want to find. It's exciting to see how many of them are going straight to the computer to check the Patrons Catalog when they come in these days!

Mrs. Floyd has collaborated with teachers at each grade level to support their instruction across the curriculum, and will continue to do so throughout the year. Be sure to ask your children what they've checked out of the library and take a few minutes to read with them.

Physical Education Report by Jim Romans

Mission Statement: The mission of physical education is to empower all students to sustain regular, lifelong fun physical activity as a foundation for a healthy, productive and fulfilling life. This achieved with a concrete understanding of the six fitness and PE components. Here is what we are doing in the first marking period:



Grades K-2: The younger students will focus on loco motor movement patterns (skip, gallop, jump, etc.) and spatial awareness. They will also address the effects and changes that exercise brings about to the body. The students will play a number of moving, chasing and tagging games to reinforce these concepts.

Grades 3-5: The older students will focus kicking and ball control with the feet, utilizing a number of skills associated with the sport of soccer. The students will work independently on skill development, with partners and in group activities. The students will also be addressing a variety of health and fitness concepts, ranging from basic anatomy, changes that occur as a result of exercise, and the benefits of healthy nutrition.

Churchill Cluster News

Why Does your PTA Need Cluster Coordinators?

The Churchill cluster PTA's are currently without Cluster Coordinators this year. How important are Cluster Coordinators?

- They hold frequent organized meetings to link the PTA leaders of the 8 schools that feed into and include Churchill High School.
- Cluster Coordinators represent our cluster at the county level (MCCPTA) and vote on behalf of our cluster. They serve on the Board of Directors with MCCPTA.
- They coordinate advocacy efforts on our cluster's issues. Last year, our cluster coordinators met regularly with elected officials, Board of Education members, principals, MCPS leadership and hosted a trip to Annapolis to give PTA members the opportunity to meet our Maryland state delegates.
- Cluster Coordinators are in touch with PTA leaders across the county and pass along to our area schools information about special events and issues.
- They testify in front of the Board of Education and County Council on budget needs to protect and improve our children's education.

Cluster coordinators this year should be advocating against cuts that could affect our children. Some potential areas of cuts that our cluster could see might include:

- More class size increases
- Academic intervention teacher reductions (teachers who help struggling students)
- Abolishment of Churchill's Signature programs, which guide our students down their paths of academic interests, provide opportunities to learn about careers in their field of interest, and enrich programs offered in high school. Participation in the signature program increases the likelihood of acceptance into a student's college of choice.
- The elimination of police officer presence in our high schools (last year each high school had protection of one officer and now one officer shares 5 high schools.)
- Less maintenance in our schools, which can lead to unhealthy conditions

What we're learning at Bells Mill

Happy Headstart

The Headstart students have been very busy learning about the home and farm units. We visited Homestead Farm which tied in nicely with our farm unit and we got to take a pumpkin home. We are learning our letters during literacy time and we are studying colors, patterns, shapes during our math time. It has been fun meeting all our new classmates and seeing our new school.

Capable Kindergarten

Kindergarten is off to a great start this year!

Our students have worked hard to create and learn to follow our classroom rules. We have also learned about why rules are important. In social studies we have learned about symbols of the United States and American leaders. In science we have been learning about the weather. We have collected weather data and made rain sticks. In writing, we have learned about how writers work. We have learned about choosing ideas, drawing pictures to tell stories,

adding details to pictures, how to stretch out words, and how to stretch out our stories.

Our students did a great job with our beginning of the year testing in reading. This testing helps us to know what our readers know and need to know to become better readers. In math, we have been working with positional words, patterns, counting and collecting data. The kindergarten teachers are proud of how well our students have adjusted to school!

Fabulous First Grade

First grade is off to such a fantastic start! The children have settled into their routines and have become hard working first graders.

Reading is great! We just love reading and learning about Kevin Henkes. The characters all have good character traits and good feelings. Two particular favorites are Chester's Way and Chrysanthemum. We're good at chunks. We really liked making popcorn boxes and filling them with popcorn words and facts and we enjoyed coloring in our boxes and our pieces of popcorn. - Melissa and Joshua from Mrs. Kingsley's class

In math, we're doing greater than and less than and equal to, like $100 > 90$, $80 < 100$ and $80 = 80$! We love counting by tens. We're already passed finding missing addends in addition and missing numbers in subtraction. We can't wait to learn about time. - By Andrew and Benjamin - Mrs. Bell's class

In writing, we work on our D.L.R. (Daily Language Review), and we are learning how to start and end a sentence. Punctuation is fun and easy! We're also learning to write for personal expression. We use the word "I" in our writing. By the way, the word "we're" is a contraction for the words "we are". - By Zoe and Josh W. - Mrs. Salomon's class

In social studies, we are learning about leaders. We learned that Mrs. Oglesby is the leader of Bells Mill. She helps us with the announcements and with fire drills. She also welcomes students to the school. We also know that Barack Obama is the leader of the United States. He welcomes visitors to the White House. Both leaders keep us safe and happy. - By Elisa and Jeremy - Mrs. Reed's class

What we're learning at Bells Mill

Spectacular Second Grade

Second grade has had a wonderful start to the new school year! We are busy learning new things and making new friends.

In Reading Initiative we have read many books and have been focusing on reading strategies, story elements, and text features. We were very excited to learn about Tomie DePaola! Second graders are continuing to add to their word wall each week as we learn how to spell new words. During Writers Workshop we are writing amazing personal narratives. We are learning how to stretch out small moments to create detailed

stories. Students have revised their writing by adding "wonderful words" and adjectives to their pieces. We are awesome authors!

In math second graders are continuing to work on their basic facts. In addition, we are focusing on number sense, graphs, computation, and estimation.

During Social Studies we have learned about rights, responsibilities, the government, and the Wampanoags. We are enjoying our unit on butterflies!! Second Grade is A LOT OF FUN!

Thoughtful Third Grade

In math the students have been learning about place value. This included learning the three ways numbers can be written: standard form, expanded form, and word form. In one of the classes, the students had a great time creating a Place Value Train. Then they read the 9-digit numbers that they put on the train.

Data analysis was another focus in math. Students are learning to interpret data on tables, bar graphs, pictographs, line graphs, line plots, stem and leaf plots, and circle graphs. Students have created graphs and plots to display data. One math class has been

learning to estimate and add or subtract to solve a story problem. Other students are learning to identify, describe and draw two-dimensional and three-dimensional figures in geometry. They are learning to use the compasses and protractors. The students had lots of fun creating a picture of "geometry they found in a leaf." All of the students are learning to use the "Work and Words Strategy" when writing a BCR response in math class.

In reading, we are studying the characteristics of realistic fiction by learning about characters, setting and plot. We are reading novels, responding to

questions about what we are reading and learning how to use strategies to help us become better readers. In third grade, we love to read!

In science, third graders have been growing the Wisconsin Fast Plant and making observations in our journals. We designed our own plant experiments to see what plants need the most. We are using the Weather Channel and National Hurricane Center websites to track hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean. We are recording the latitude and longitude measurements to study later in the year.

Fascinating Fourth Grade

What a great start to the year! The fourth grade has been working so hard this quarter.

Ms. Wang's Marvelous Math classes have been working very hard on unit 1. Some classes worked on patterns and functions, algebraic representation, number theory, and number comparison. Other classes worked on geometry, statistics, and place value. We have all taken our first

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What we're learning at Bells Mill

Fascinating Fourth Grade (continued from page 9)

unit assessment and we are moving on to new topics in math. On Halloween, we all read a great math story and learned a fun math song. Ask your child about it!

Mrs. Childress' Remarkable Readers have been reading fables and fantasies. We had a great time reading Stanley and the Magic Lamp, Abel's Island, Castle in the Attic, and Trumpet of the Swan. We love to listen to read-alouds and discuss the plot, setting, and the characters. We are very excited to start reading Historical Fiction books next quarter!

Mr. Nocente has been doing a great job teaching science and social studies. In science we have been learning all about ecosystems. We were able to make our own eco-columns. Our terrariums and aquariums have been so exciting. We even got to take home our mosquito fish. In social studies we have started our Native American unit. We went on a great field trip to St. Mary's City to learn all about the Yaocomaco Indians and the first Maryland settlement.

Ms. Powelson's Wonderful Writers have been working on fables and personal narrative. We love to write about experiences that we have had and share them with the class. We also got to write super spooky Halloween Fables. Writing is great!

Focused Fifth Grade

In reading, we are studying historical fiction. As a whole group, we are reading historical fiction picture books and discussing story elements as well as the historical time period. In small groups, we have been discussing different strategies to use while reading in order to enhance comprehension, as well as the content of the core books. The students are doing a great job responding to their texts, learning new vocabulary words, and participating in class!

In Writing the students will be drafting and developing a personal narrative. The students will take notes on an event they experience that will help give them a detailed account of that experience. In class the students will use the notes and the lessons to develop a story that uses the five senses and figurative language to help bring that story to life.

In Math 5, we learned all about factors, including GCF and LCM. We use factor trees to find prime factorization and factor rainbows to find factor pairs. We also find prime and composite numbers. We will begin graphing ordered pairs

soon!

In Math A, we are learning about data and analyzing graphs. We are also learning about biased and unbiased surveys. Math A students are also learning how to construct different types of graphs and tables, which involves determining scale and intervals.

In Math B, we are working on creating different types of data displays. We are reviewing measures of central tendency and deciding how to use them to interpret data. We are also calculating the quartiles and extremes.

In 5th grade Science, the students have started off learning about all the objects in motion around. They have learned that all objects need a force in order to start moving. The students can describe the three types of motion, how fast those objects are moving, and the two types of energy that are displayed in those motions. Students complete a series of experiments related to these topics which reinforces their knowledge, and allows them to create new questions to test.

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What we're learning at Bells Mill

Fifth Grade (continued from page 10)

In Social Studies the students are learning about the different events that frustrated the Colonists and lead them to revolt against the British. They will be able to describe the different acts or laws that were placed on the Colonists by the British, and how the Colonists responded to those acts. The students will create a power point presentation that relates to

these topics. They will conclude the unit learning about the key battles during the Revolutionary War.

As you can tell, we are very busy in 5th grade! We have had a great time getting to know each other and look forward to the fun and learning that takes place each day.

Ms. McNamara's Autism Class

Ms. McNamara's class has had a successful start to our school year. We have completed our first theme unit about community helpers and now are learning about life on a farm. Ms. McNamara's class also finished our first reading group book I Love School, by Philemon Sturges. And we are now working on

the book The Little Red Hen. Our community outing trips have started and we are looking forward to going to Butler's Orchard after our farm theme unit is concluded.

As we enter October we will begin the Alternate Maryland School Assessment which we

will all be working hard to complete.

Ms. McNamara's class is also happy to welcome all our new para educators in our program: Jan Barr, Marion Smith, and Norma Milner.



Churchill Cluster News (continued from page 7)

- Less maintenance in our schools, which can lead to unhealthy conditions
- Elimination of sports and after school programs.

We need Cluster Coordinators to advocate on our behalf now more than ever because of a huge budget gap. To meet the state law for FY 2012 providing the same funds per student as this year, the county should be contributing \$84 million more than this year (due to increased enrollment.) However, the county has implied they will only increase the amount by \$2 million-so severe cuts will be likely.

If you are interested in representing your community at the county level, please contact MCCPTA VP of Educational Issues, Laurie Halverson at lauriehalverson@verizon.net. (Laurie was a past Bells Mill PTA President and has been a Churchill Cluster Coordinator for 3 years and would be glad to explain the responsibilities for this volunteer position.) Many Cluster Coordinators are busy parents (moms and dads) with full time jobs-so if you are a mom or dad who has a passion for education and you don't mind writing, organizing, attending monthly meetings, and speaking through a microphone, there are 6,595 children in the Churchill cluster who need your help!

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Bells Mill Elementary School

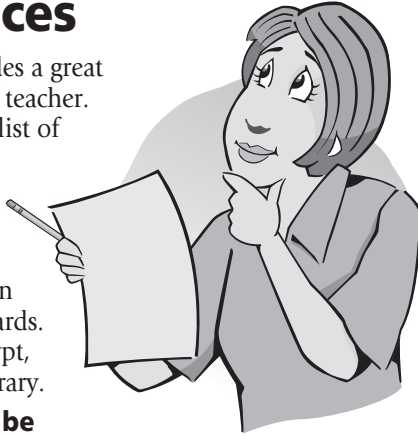


October 2010

Prepare questions for parent-teacher conferences

Your parent-teacher conference provides a great opportunity to work with your child's teacher. Since the time may be limited, take a list of questions to ask such as:

- **What skills will my child be expected to master this year?** If you know that she's expected to know her multiplication tables, you may want to get flash cards. If she'll do a project on ancient Egypt, you can plan family trips to the library.
- **How will my child's progress be evaluated?** Ask about weekly quizzes, chapter tests and national exams.
- **Will my child have homework?** How much homework should you expect your child to have each night? How long should it take? How much should you help? What should you do if she has problems?
- **What should I do if my child is absent?** Regular attendance is key to a child's success in school, but if your child must miss a day, make sure you and the teacher can work together to keep your child on track.
- **What can I do at home to help?** How can you reinforce skills your child is learning in the classroom?
- **What is the best way for us to communicate?** Exchange email addresses and phone numbers. Find out the best time to contact the teacher.



School skills build life skills

Getting along with others helps your child in school and in life. So teach your child to:

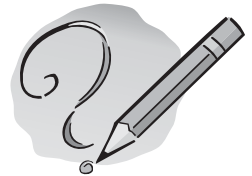
- **Use good manners**—to say *please* and *thank you*, hold the door for others, and take turns.
- **Follow the rules**—to listen when others are talking and stay seated during lessons.
- **Respect others**—to be helpful and kind, and avoid gossip.

Source: Hal Urban, *Life's Greatest Lessons: 20 Things That Matter*, ISBN: 0-743-23782-X, Fireside Press.

Questions review writing

Three questions go a long way as you review your child's writing:

1. **Does it make sense?** Read your child's writing to see if you can understand what he's trying to say.
2. **Are paragraphs used correctly?** Each paragraph should focus on one specific idea.
3. **Are sentences correct?** Sentences need a subject and a verb. They should express a complete thought.



Make math time count

Here are some ways you can help your child make the best use of time spent on math homework:

- **Break it up.** Set a timer for 20 or 30 minutes. When the time is up, have your child take a break.
- **Have your child teach you.** Say, "Could you show me how to do long division?" As your child teaches you the process, she'll be reviewing it for herself.



Help your child make good decisions

It's not too early to allow your child to make decisions on his own. For example, offer:

- **Young children** simple choices: Bologna sandwich or peanut butter and jelly? The red shirt or the one with stripes?
- **Older kids** a wider range of choices: which after-school activity to join, what time to do a chore, how to arrange his room.

Of course, you'll still set the boundaries. He can decide whether to start homework with math or science, but you say he must finish homework before watching TV.

If he makes a poor decision, allow him to experience the consequences. Ask, "What would you do differently next time?" And don't forget to comment positively when he makes a good decision.

Source: Richard L. Curwin, *Making Good Choices: Developing Responsibility, Respect, and Self-Discipline in Grades 4-9*, ISBN 0-76194-634-9, Corwin Press, a Sage Publications Company.



Q&A How can parents show that schoolwork is not a race?

Q: My son loves sports and is very competitive. But this love of competition has carried over into his schoolwork. He rushes through every assignment, hoping to be the first one finished—and he doesn't worry about neatness or checking his work. How can I help?

A: Your son has a bad case of "hurry-itis." He turns every task into a competition and wants to be first across the finish line.

First, talk with his teacher. Say you would like to work together on a plan to help your son focus on the quality of his schoolwork.

Then, talk with your son about your concerns. Since he loves sports, use a comparison. Sometimes, like in a race, runners need to get to the finish line first. But in football, when the quarterback is throwing a pass, accuracy is more important than speed.

Explain that doing homework is more like throwing a pass than running a race. Tell him that you're going to help him double check his work each night. If it's not up to standard, you'll ask him to do it over. Eventually you can expect him to double check his work on his own. Your goal is to teach him to be responsible for the quality of his work.

Before long, he'll figure out that when he slows down, he'll get it right the first time—a strategy that is sure to make him an academic winner!



Parent Quiz **?** Are you teaching perseverance?

Teachers say that today's kids don't always have the skills to cope with life's minor hassles. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child learn to deal with frustration:

___ **1. Do you understand** that it isn't your job to protect your child from all of life's ups and downs?

___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to stick with tasks?

___ **3. Do you help** your child link effort to success by saying things like "It isn't supposed to be easy. But you'll get it if you stick with it"?

___ **4. Do you help** your child name her feelings? "You're frustrated that learning to ride a bike is taking longer than you hoped."

___ **5. Do you point out** real-life stories of people who have overcome challenges?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means your child is learning that she can work through frustration. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."
—Albert Einstein

Enjoy at-home learning

When parents get involved, children are more likely to succeed in school. Reinforcing learning at home doesn't have to be a chore. Make it fun and interesting! With your child:

- **Read aloud.** Find exciting new books at the library. Take turns reading. Be dramatic. Use funny voices.
- **Play games.** Get out your board games, puzzles or cards. While you're enjoying yourselves, you'll develop your child's powers of concentration.
- **Get creative.** Write stories together and illustrate them. You'll create some family keepsakes!

If you suspect bullying ...

Bullying can have serious effects, including problems with emotions and schoolwork. If you suspect your child may be the victim of a bully:

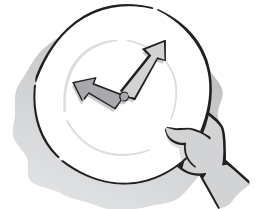
- **Respond with care and love.** Stay calm.
- **Note details about the bullying.** When and where does it occur? Who has seen it? Who is involved?
- **Share your concerns** with the principal or your child's teacher or counselor. They will work with you to help your child.

Take time to tell time

Most schools have clocks with hands and faces—*analog* clocks.

Show your child the hour hand and the minute hand. Help your child make an analog clock with a paper plate face and construction paper hands.

Then practice telling time every day.



Helping Children Learn[®]

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Dates to remember

Principal's Tea (2-3) November 8th, 7:00 - 8:00 pm.

Early Release Day Parent Conferences November 11th - 12th, 1:00 pm.

Principal's Tea (4-5) November 15th, 7:00 - 8:00 pm.

Ledo's Night November 16th, 5:00 pm - Close.

Family Bingo Night November 19th, 6:30 - 8:00 pm.

Early Release Day November 24th, 1:00 pm .

No School November 25th - 26th, Happy Thanksgiving!

Portrait Make Up Day 5th Grade Panoramic Picture December 2nd, 10:00 am.

Pta Meeting December 7th, 7:15 pm Apr.

Club Bells Mill - Winter Wonderland December 11th, 6:00 - 8:00 pm.

Ledo's Night December 15th, 5:00 pm -Close.

Winter Chorus Concert December 15th, 7:00 pm.

Instrumental Music Concert December 16th 2:00 pm.

Staff Holiday Lunch December 17th.

No School December 24th - January 3rd, Winter Break!

Movie Night January 8th.

The Bells Mill Beacon
November 2010

Editor
Sugam Garg

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