



The Bells Mill Beacon

March 2011

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PTA President's Message by Ali Weitzman

It is hard to believe that spring break is almost here. Our PTA has been so busy, that time is just flying by this year. We have now finished our formal membership drive and I am so excited to announce that **our PTA currently has over 400 members** including parents and staff. It's never too late to join -- just download our membership form from www.bellsmill.org. More than 30 years of research has proven that children do better when their parents are involved both at home and in school. Grades are higher. Test scores rise.

Self-esteem grows. Schools improve.

These are powerful outcomes from your active involvement in your child's education. Our highly active PTA has a place for everyone who wants to be involved in their child's education. If you are interested in volunteering, please let me know or review the volunteer opportunities always available on bellsmill.org. Don't have time for PTA? Your dues go a long way toward enriching your child's educational experience at BMES.

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Principal's Message by Jerri Oglesby

Wow! I can't believe that we are already at the end of the third marking period and that spring break is right around the corner. We have had enough cold weather and we are all ready for spring, warm weather and outside recess every day. **Time certainly flies when you are having fun!** That is what I see every day when I greet your children, see them in their classrooms learning and going about their day. You should be so proud of their daily accomplishments! I hope that when you are in the building you take time to see the great examples of your child's work that are posted in the hallways!

We are in the process of completing the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). Students in grades 3, 4 and 5 have been putting forth great effort. The MSA provides us with a measure of student achievement in the area of reading and math. The test is given to all third, fourth and fifth grade students on the same date across the state of Maryland. We will also be administering the fifth grade science assessment on April 11 and 12. Fifth grade parents please refrain from scheduling appointments for your children on those days. You will receive your child's individual scores from this year's test by next fall. The school will receive our school data over the summer. Keep in mind this is just one

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Principals Message (continued from page 1)

snapshot of your child. When considering how your child is performing in school you need to look at many pieces of data. Teachers use many other measures through the year to monitor your child's progress. Some of these measures of student mastery may be class discussions, response to reading, unit assessment, projects, quizzes, etc. **We use the MSA as one piece of data in helping us plan and program for our students.**

The students in second grade will be administered the Terra Nova during the week of April 4. Please do not schedule doctor appointments for your child during this week. Students will be taking the assessment during their reading period. The **Terra Nova is a nationally norm-referenced test of basic skills.** Montgomery County uses the test to compare how well our students perform relative to the performances of the nationwide sample of students of the same age and grade that took the test. The test consists of five sub-tests: Reading, Language, Language Mechanics, Mathematics, and Mathematics Computation. Parents usually receive their child's scores in the early fall.

Currently we are in the midst of the global screening process of all **second grade children for identification of gifted and talented.** This means that all second grade students will complete two assessments, the Raven and the In-View. These assessments along with teacher referrals, examination of student progress, and parent input will be used to determine if children qualify for identification. Second grade parents received information explaining the process. All second grade parents have received a general mailing from MCPS requesting input on your child's strengths. Please take time to complete this and return to your child's teacher. We value your insight and need your input as we look at many pieces of data in this process. Do not hesitate to contact

me or Ms. Taylor if you have questions concerning this process. Once the process is completed parents of students who meet the criteria will be notified by mail. Students who do not meet the criteria this year are eligible to be rescreened the following school year. Being identified as a gifted and talented student provides valuable information to teachers on how to craft and plan their lessons to meet the specific needs of the children. Not having the identification of gifted and talented does not prevent your child from participating in above level reading and math instruction.

Believe it or not, even though we are only in the third marking period, the staff and I are already beginning to plan for next school year. Please notify neighbors of our kindergarten orientation that will take place on May 12 and 13. In addition if you know of other students who will be attending Bells Mill next year please encourage their parents to notify us. Our staffing for next year is related to our projections as well as the numbers we can verify will be attending.

Again, you should be extremely proud of the work your children do each day. Our teachers work very hard as teams to plan and present interesting lessons each day. They have high expectations for all students and expect all to succeed. Please check your child's backpack and review with them each day what they have learned. Instead of asking what they did each day, ask them to tell you a question they asked, or something interesting that happened during math or reading class. Have your child share what they are reading about and what was discussed in class. **Please take time to share your own love of learning by reading every night with them.** By taking time to read the paper or your own favorite author while they are reading models how important learning and reading is. Everyone is working hard at school and the staff and I appreciate your continued support.

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The Counselor's Corner by Sarah Kanter

Hello again from the Counselor's Corner! A lot has been happening since I last wrote in. To begin with, our school is making progress in **our monthly happiness consensogram**. Students are surveyed monthly to see how happy they are attending Bells Mill. In the beginning of the school year, 86% of all students said they were almost always or sometimes happy at Bells Mill. Our data from February shows that 91% of all students are almost always or sometimes happy attending Bells Mill. Our school goal is to get 93% of all students to report that they are almost always or sometimes happy at Bells Mill. We are closing in on that number and the students are very excited to see that so many of their peers enjoy coming to school at Bells Mill.

Monthly guidance lessons have been going great for all grade levels. Some topics covered include **distinguishing between tattling and reporting (kindergarten)**, **showing respect**

through listening (1st grade), **forgiving others (2nd grade)**, **feeling good about ourselves (3rd grade)**, **bullying (4th grade)**, and **coping with test stress (5th grade)**. Students in all grade levels have been putting the learned skills to use all around the building with their peers.

Lunch time has also been very busy. I am currently meeting with 3 different lunch bunches: **Bells Mill Friends**, **Feelin' Groovy**, and **Cool Cats**. Students in these lunch bunches are learning important skills to help them get along well with others and cope with personal challenges in their lives. In Bells Mill Friends, students are learning what skills they need to demonstrate to get along with others. Feelin' Groovy is a group for students learning to feel good about themselves and stay positive. Cool Cats is a group that focuses on anger management.

The **Best Buddies** and the **Ambassador** programs have

been going strong as well. Many of our Best Buddies continue to connect with friends in the Autism program and are showing what it means to be a caring, respectful person. Our 4th grade Ambassadors are demonstrating responsibility by helping out around the building. Recently, the students in Ms. Wang's class and Ms. Powelson's class took over as Ambassadors and will serve for the remainder of the school year. We have students watering plants, taking out recycling, and helping out in the Headstart class to name just a few ways that they are helping.

It has been a very busy and rewarding few months in the counseling department. It's hard to believe that Spring is just around the corner. As always, I am here to offer support to anyone that has questions or concerns about their child. Please don't hesitate to call (301-469-1046) or email me at Sarah_R_Kanter@mcpsmd.org.

Principals Message (continued from page 2)

I know that we have many fun and exciting events looming on the horizon. The PTA has many events planned for the end of the year and I know the staff has some exciting lessons planned for the fourth quarter. I want to send a huge thank you to every family who has given countless hours to the many events we have already experienced as well as to those that are in the future. We truly appreciate all the hard

work that our community puts forth to provide exciting and fun events for the children.

In closing, we are happy to see spring finally arrive. Enjoy your spring break with family and friends. The staff and I are looking forward to an exciting end to this school year. **As always thank you for helping to make Bells Mill Elementary a great place to learn!**

Art Update by Tonya Kirby

CLAY! CLAY! CLAY!

Its Clay Season in the art room! Everyone is working on sculpting and glazing a variety of ceramics projects.

5th Grade artists are building slab boxes and decorating them with carved designs inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement.

4th Grade artists are building a large tile that has both addi-

tive and subtractive sculptures on it, similar to relief sculptures you see on the side of buildings.

3rd Grade artists are building flat ceramic dishes filled with symbols from around the world.

2nd Grade artists are building coil pots inspired by Jomon Pottery from Japan.

1st Grade artists are sculpting clay animals, and

Kindergarten artists are

making pinch pots and bells filled with textures.

Headstart and Students with Autism have built slab pots.

Bells Mill is lucky to own two kilns, and each clay project is fired twice at a temperature of 1800 degrees! Be sure to store the new clay projects in a safe place where they won't fall and break!

Music Notes by Valerie Vinson

Bells Mill students have been having a blast (and learning lots!) in general music 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, moving, and playing instruments.** Below you will find the musical objectives that each grade has focused on during the third marking period:

- K:** Identifying classroom instruments by sight and sound; Following musical cues in various song games; Keeping the steady beat while listening to music.
- 1:** Reading simple rhythm and pitch patterns; Improvising using instruments to enhance stories and songs.
- 2:** Reading and performing simple rhythm and pitch patterns on classroom instruments; Using instruments to improvise simple rhythmic and melodic phrases.
- 3:** Reading simple melodies and interpreting music symbols to perform a song; Following sequences of movement in a folk dance.
- 4:** Performing song games and traditional dances from a variety of world cultures; Notating short rhythmic phrases from dictation using standard notation.
- 5:** Performing folk songs and traditional dances from a variety of world cultures; Notating short melodic phrases from dictation using standard notation.

REMINDER

The Spring chorus concert is on May 25th at 7 pm.



Nurse Notes by Deborah Stapleton, RN, BSN, SHCN

Hearing and Vision Screening will be held for all Kindergarten, Head Start, new entrants to Montgomery County Public Schools that were not screened within the last year, and 1st grade students that were not screened in Kindergarten. This will be held on April 7th and 8th.

If you are able to volunteer to help with hearing and vision please contact the Health Room at 301-469-1248. In addition, if you have specific hearing and vision concerns regarding your child please let us know to add them to our screening list.

Kids are participating in organized sports at younger ages and parents need to be aware of signs and symptoms of concussions on the field. This article is from the National Children's Hospital.

Student Athletes and Concussions

Many students each year choose to participate in a school sport. While there are many benefits associated with getting involved, engaging in a sport is not without risk of injury. One of the most common sports injuries experienced is a concussion or traumatic brain injury (TBI).

A concussion is a disruption in the function of the brain as a result of a forceful blow to the head, either direct or indirect, and can range from minor to very severe.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 135,000 sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, are treated in U.S. emergency departments each year.

Although most people tend to associate concussions with football, they can occur in any sport or recreation activity that has a higher frequency of collisions (e.g. ice hockey, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, and wrestling).

When a person experiences a concussion it

Health Room Reminders:

Please check your children for lice on a regular basis. This is the best way to prevent the spread of lice! If you need any assistance in screening your child please contact the Health Room, we are glad to help.

Kindergarten Orientation will be held on May 12 and 13.

Medication: If your child needs medication in school please contact the Health Room for the appropriate forms to be completed by your caregiver. Students are not permitted to self carry medication at school. Emergency medication may be an exception on a case by case basis with approval from the school nurse and administration.

results in a set of physical, cognitive emotional, and/or sleep-related symptoms. Concussions can occur even when the athlete has no loss of consciousness. Duration of symptoms is highly variable and may last from several minutes to days, weeks, months, or even longer in some cases. Parents, coaches, and student athletes need to learn concussion signs and symptoms and what to do if a concussion occurs.

Below are a few things parents and coaches should look for if they think a student athlete has suffered a concussion:

1. Appears dazed or stunned
2. Forgets plays or current activities
3. Is unsure of recent events (game, score, or opponent)
4. Can't recall events before or after the blow

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Physical Education Report by Jim Romans

What we are doing in PE this quarter:

Grades K-2: The younger students will be progressing through our annual gymnastics unit where they will be assessed on three gymnastic body positions. During the unit, the students will progress through simple body positions and tumbles, while progressing to larger pieces of equipment and apparatus. During the unit, the students will need to understand the difference between upper body muscles, lower body muscles and discuss the role they play supporting and transferring body weight. The students will be assessed on static balance and the ability to transfer one's own weight onto, over, and off of equipment. Following gymnastics, the students will identify and demonstrate concepts involving jumping/ landing mechanics and our rhythms unit, as well as basic health, fitness and nutrition concepts.

Grades 3-5: The older students will all progress through our annual gymnastics unit. They will be assessed on five gymnastic body positions, while progressing from simple tumbles to more complex tumbles. The students will need to identify major muscle groups of the upper body, and how these muscle groups play an important role in pushing, pulling, and supporting one's body weight during gymnastics. The students will be assessed on static, active, and dynamic balance and the ability to transfer one's own weight onto, over, and off of equipment. The students will progress to different apparatus and create a small group routine to present as a culminating activity. Following gymnastics, the students will participate in our annual hockey unit, culminating with our 16th annual 5th Grade Hockey Final Four. As always, a secondary focus of all our PE units will be basic health, fitness, and nutrition concepts.

Media Center News by Joanne Floyd

The media center continues to be a hub of activity with students coming in and out all day long to borrow a good book or two!

The Black-Eyed Susan program is in full swing now for

all 2nd 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. The 4th grade students have been busy checking out the biography section lately to find interesting individuals for the wax museum. Soon we will be meeting to conduct an author study, too. Kindergarten

and 1st grade classes have just begun their economics units. Kindergarten students will be learning about how some people choose to spend their money. First graders will come to understand how natural resources impact our economy.

ESOL by Susan Thomson

All students currently enrolled in ESOL, as well as all students who qualified for ESOL for this year, and whose parents refused ESOL services, will take the **English Language Proficiency Test**, a requirement of the State of Maryland. The K - Grade 5 test will be given over several days between March 30 and April 29. Students in Headstart ESOL will take the assessment between March 30 and May 9. If your child will be taking the ESOL assessment, and you know that he/she will be absent from school at some point during the testing window,

please send me, Susan Thomson, ESOL teacher, a note with your child's name and dates of upcoming absences so that I may best plan the testing schedule.

ESOL students are learning about a variety of topics during marking period three. HeadStart students are learning about community workers. First and second graders are writing persuasive paragraphs. Third, fourth and fifth graders are concentrating on word study and essay writing.

What we're learning at Bells Mill

Happy Headstart

The Head Start students have been busy learning all about the **Firehouse**. We are reading so many interesting and fun books about the Firehouse. We had a visit from the Head Start **dental hygienist**. She told the children about dental health and read a book all about keeping your teeth healthy. The students also learned about **black history** and a few of our Head Start students participated in the black history assembly. **Valentine's Day** was also fun for the students, they exchanged cards and had a small party.

Capable Kindergarten

Our kindergarten students continue to work hard and impress their teachers and families with the results of their work. The creative thinking skill we have been working with this quarter is **synthesis**, which means we are working to put together parts to understand ideas or concepts, or to form a new idea. As learners, we have been learning about how **persistence, effort and motivation helps us to achieve our goals.**

In **language arts**, we have been learning about rimes, or chunks or words such as *ot* and *op*, we can use to read and write words. We have also been learning about blends such as *fl*. We continue to work on building our word walls with words we see often in reading

and use regularly in writing. It is important to be able to read and spell these words "just like that" so we don't get slowed down in our reading or writing. During Writing Workshop we have been writing narrative texts and have been working to add details to our writing. We have been listening to books by Rosemary Wells and Angela Johnson for inspiration in our writing.

In **mathematics**, we have been working with measurement and geometry. We have been estimating and measuring length and weight using non-standard units and balance scales. We have also been learning about plane and solid shapes. Our kindergartners are learning to talk about shapes and their attributes, as well as how shapes can be put together and taken apart.

In **social studies** we have been studying economics. We have been learning about goods and services, wants and needs, workers, and the marketplace. In science, we have been learning about the external features of plants, animals and humans and what they need for survival. In health, we have been learning about cleanliness and disease prevention.

It sounds like we do nothing but work and study in kindergarten, but we take time out to play as well. Our kindergarten students enjoy playing with their friends not only at recess, but in the classroom during our afternoon center time. We are so proud of how our classes have grown together to support each other as learners and as friends.

Fabulous First Grade

First Grade is the best!

Our next author will be **Eric Carle**. He is both the author and illustrator of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and lots of other great books. We've learned a lot of new chunks like "op", "ay", "ail and ale". We've

learned the characteristics of folktales and fairy tales. We love to read independently and in small groups. By *Megan and Tommy from Ms. Ader's class*

Social Studies has been so interesting. We're learning about natural resources. We've

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What we're learning at Bells Mill

Fabulous First Grade (continued from page 7)

learned the difference between natural resources and human made things (like plastic, crayons, toys). We've read about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. Do you know that President Washington had a dog named Sweet Lips and another one named True Love? We also learned about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. By *Alyssa and Jesse from Ms. Salomon's class*

In **writers workshop** this quarter, we're learning persuasive writing. That means, we're writing to convince someone to like something or to do something. For example, we trying to

convince Ms. Bedell to let us have a class pet or to let us have extra recess. So far, we haven't had an answer from Ms. Bedell. We work quietly in writing and help each other sometimes. By *Charlotte and Babacar from Ms. Bedell's class*

Math has been great. We're learning how to borrow numbers in subtraction. We can borrow when the problem has two and sometimes three digits. Sometimes we add two and three digit numbers together. That means we may have to regroup numbers. We love doing subtraction and borrowing. By *Aliki and Eli from Ms. King-sley's class.*

Spectacular Second Grade

Time is flying by! Even though we are excited to look back and celebrate our many successes, we all have a lot of work to do this year as we push forward toward our goals. This quarter our second graders are exploring the genres of folk tales and biographies as well as learning about how to make inferences, find adjectives, create word analogies, utilize strategies for test taking, and using pre-viewing, predicting, and fix-up strategies. **In writing our second graders are using the friendly letter format and have even tried**

to persuade a teacher at Bells Mill to be their Valentine! During science the students have been investigating the concept of balancing and weighing through the use of scales, beam balances and mobiles. They even created their own mobiles! As we move into social studies, the students are focusing on economics; specifically goods, services and numerous resources. The students are learning about different types of markets, as well as buying products and saving our money! In addition to economics, the students are continu-

ously focusing on the United States and world maps. In math, students will be focusing on becoming experts on their math facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Students will be learning about how to classify different shapes by looking at their attributes. They will be learning about the three different types of angles and creating their own angles. We will also begin to study fractions of a whole and fractions as part of a set. **Second graders are becoming math geniuses!**

Thoughtful Third Grade

Read all about it! Third grade reading keeps us busy. We are preparing for the MSA in March. We know we will rock the test! In the third quarter, we are studying the historical fiction genre. We are doing this through novel studies and identifying the characteristics of this genre. We are also excited to be starting literature circles this quarter. We will be learning about figurative language. A fun and creative way to communicate! 3rd graders are learning persuasive writing skills, too. Great things are happening!

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What we're learning at Bells Mill

Thoughtful Third Grade (continued from page 8)

Students have learned about the animal classification system, animal adaptations, single celled animals and observed cells under a microscope. ***They have read about how third graders (including one of our own, Nathaniel Drexler) can and have made a difference in the world*** and how the government protects plants and animals.

The third grade math students are polishing their test taking skills for the MSA tests. In preparation for the MSA tests, they are learning to write strong BCR responses during math class. One math class is studying fractions and probability. Later they will be learning to multiply and divide with 2-digit and 3-digit numbers. The students will be using the Hands on Equations scales to solve their algebra problems also. The math students will be solving money problems. So if you are bargain shopping, just ask your child which item to buy for the best price.

In another math class the math students will be learning about patterns in multiplication and division problems. During math discourse (that means their deep math discussions), they will identify and compare different strategies for solving story problems. The math students will be learning to calculate elapsed time. So if you need to know how much time has passed on a certain day, just ask him/her to give you the answer.

Fascinating Fourth Grade

In **math** we are working on Data and Statistics. We are also working with translations, rotations, reflections. The M.S.A. is coming and we are studying topics that includes time, area, perimeter, etc.

In **science** we are starting solids, liquids, and gases. We took a pretest about these topics on the date February 25, 2011.

In **social studies** we just finished learning about pilgrims from Jamestown and Plymouth.

In **reading** we are reading biographies for the Wax Museum. In the wax museum we will pick a famous person to tell about their life. In **writing** we are learning about persuasive writing so we can write our own persuasive letters. Pros and cons are included in persuasive writing.

Focused Fifth Grade

5th graders have been very busy! We have lots to do, lots to learn, and we have made so much progress through the first half of the year!

In **writing**, we just finished up writing an informational brochure on a science topic. We researched the topics and constructed a brochure to explain the topic and how it affects our everyday lives. We have now moved onto our Persuasive Writing Letters. The students are off to a wonderful start researching their topics. Our writing continues to develop and improve with each assignment.

In **reading**, 5th grade began quarter three by continuing on a genre study by focusing on science fiction. During the novel studies students will use character analysis to better understand plot and themes. **We also wrote songs describing the different MSA strategies we have learned throughout the year and will perform these new pop hits at an assembly.** At home all 5th graders should still be reading nightly, working towards the goal of reading 25 at home books by the end of the year.

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What we're learning at Bells Mill

Fifth Grade (continued from page 9)

In **Math 5**, we have been working very hard on learning to complete functions with multi-digit numbers, decimals, and fractions. We will end the unit working with percents and conversions between fractions, decimals, and percents. We are going to be wrapping up unit 3 towards the end of February. Then, we will move on to unit 4, which focuses on organizing data and creating graphs.

In **Math A**, we are just about finished with Unit 2CD. Unit 2 has been so long! We have become very comfortable working with fractions, decimals, and percents. We will be moving on to geometry in the beginning of February. We will learn about area of geometric figures, circumference, and determine angle relationships.

In **Math B**, we are beginning unit 3. We are working on geometry and have been learning lots of new information. We are working on identifying linear and angular relationships. It has been fun to connect what we are learning to the real world. Geometry is all around us!

In **Science**, the students just completed their journey in space with our astronomy unit. The students learned about the different stars, planets, moons, and other celestial objects that are found in space. The students created constellations with a mythological story behind it. We also observed the moon for an entire month to see the different phases of the moon. We had a blast with this unit.

In **Social Studies**, students completed their study on independence. They learned about how the Declaration of Independence was drafted, and the process it took to complete it. Students are now studying the economy. Students will be able to explain the way the United States economy was created, and how we are constantly in search of different goods and services that satisfy our economic wants.

We will continue to work hard in order to prepare ourselves for middle school! We are looking forward to all the events unique to 5th grade that are just around the corner.

Autism Update

April is Autism Awareness Month!

To celebrate this diversity, **the Bells Mill Elementary School family will be coloring and cutting out puzzle pieces which will be put together to create one giant puzzle representing everyone in the school.** The puzzle pieces will be sent home during March so that the puzzle will be created in early April. Please look for these in your child's backpack. If you have any ques-

tions, please e-mail carolyn_petela@mcpsmd.org I'm very excited to see how creative the students can get this year to represent their uniqueness

but also, by everyone having the same puzzle piece to work with, celebrating how we are all also part of the same community.



Teacher Feature

Meet some of the new members of the Bells Mill family

Meet Ms. Latricia Thomas Assistant Principal



How long have you been teaching at Bells Mill ES?

This is my second year as the Assistant Principal of Bells Mill.

What do you like best about Bells Mill?

I've worked in a lot of schools, but I must say, Bells Mill has the best students, parents and staff ever! Everyone is respectful and there is a real sense of community.

Where were you born?

I was born in Philadelphia and spent most of my life living in Philadelphia.

What were your favorite books growing up?

As a child, I loved to read books by Ezra Jack Keats. His books often depict city life and the pictures and story lines are rich with culture and diversity.

What do you enjoy reading now?

I enjoy reading educational journals to stay abreast of the most

recent research, teaching materials, and best teaching and leadership practices.

What is your favorite food?

My favorite food is a cheese steak from Philadelphia.

What has been your most memorable vacation?

The best vacation ever, is when I went to the Bahamas' with my best girlfriends after my college graduation.

If you could visit anywhere in the world where would it be?

Any country in Africa!

Did you have a pet when you were growing up? Do you have any now?

Yes, I had a dog when I was younger and a cat when I graduated college, but I don't have any pets now.

Do you have a favorite sport?

Yes, my favorite sport is football and I'm a huge Eagles fan!

Who is your hero, someone you really look up to?

My mom is my hero. She raised me by herself and I thank her every day for providing me with a sound education and for instilling in me morals and respect for others.

What is the greatest piece of advice you could give to Bells Mill students?

Always do your best, follow your dreams and never give up!

Meet Ms. Catharine Matthews Kindergarten Teacher

How long have you been teaching at Bells Mill ES?

I have been teaching at Bells Mill since the beginning of the 2009 school year.

What do you like best about Bells Mill?

I like my students best of all! The promethean board is pretty neat too!

Where were you born?

I was born outside Forth Worth, Texas. I lived there for five years.

Have you spent most of your life living close to your birthplace, or have you traveled?

I have lived in lots of different places. After Texas my family moved to New Jersey, right outside New York City, to be close to our family. Then we moved to Pennsylvania, we lived right outside Philadelphia. I went to college in North Carolina and then I settled here.

Who were your favorite books growing up?

I loved Nancy Drew books. I also loved the American Girl doll books. I had Addy and Kirsten so I read all of their stories.

What do you enjoy reading now?

I read books for my graduate

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Teacher Feature

Meet some of the new members of the Bells Mill family

Ms. Catharine Matthews

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school classes. I also like to read books that friends recommend to me.

What is your favorite food?
Favorite food is very tricky, I have lots! I think my favorite food is carrots and sweet potatoes. When I was a baby I ate so many it turned my skin orange!

What has been your most memorable vacation?
When I was in seventh grade my Dad took us to Australia. It was the best vacation ever! We spent two weeks exploring Australia. I didn't want to leave.

If you could visit anywhere in the world where would it be?
I am almost done visiting every state in the US... only eleven more to go. After that I would love to go to Greece, Costa Rica, or New Zealand.



Did you have a pet when you were growing up? Do you have any pets now?

I had a rabbit when I was growing up. His name was Butter-milk. I also had frogs, and fish. My family has a dog named Oliver in Pennsylvania. I don't have a dog here, so I volunteer and foster dogs that are looking for forever homes.

Do you have a favorite sport?
I like to play softball and volleyball. I like to watch basketball, football, and hockey. I love the Eagles!

If you were not a teacher, what would you like to be?
This is a tricky question for me. I made my mind up to be a teacher in first grade and haven't considered anything else. I guess I would love to work with animals or photography.

Who is your hero, someone you really look up to?
I look up to my Mom and Dad. They are compassionate, dedicated, and motivated. I really admire that, and aspire to be the same.

What is the greatest piece of advice you could give to Bells Mill students?
Follow the golden rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated. Try your best and work hard.

Meet Ms. Lindsay Hein Music Teacher

How long have you been teaching at Bells Mill?
Since this September.

What do you like best about Bells Mill?
The staff and children were so welcoming and inviting.

Where were you born?
I was born in Germantown, Maryland. I have always lived close to home.

What were your favorite books growing up?
I had two favorite books. The first was Green Eggs and Ham, by Dr. Suess. The second, Rumpelstiltskin, by the Grimm Brothers

What kind of reading do you do now?
I love reading mysteries and suspense novels.

What is your favorite food?
My favorite food is lasagna and I have been eating it for as long as I can remember.

What has been your most memorable vacation?
A trip to Boise, Idaho with some friends. I didn't stop laughing for five days straight.

If you could visit anywhere in the world where would it be?

(Continued on page 13)

Teacher Feature

Meet some of the new members of the Bells Mill family

Ms. Lindsay Hein

(continued from page 12)

The Alps. I would love to go skiing there.

Did you have a pet when you were growing up? Do you have any pets now?

I had a dog and a gold fish. My Goldfish's name was Goldy and my dog's name was P.V. I don't know why we chose that

for his name! I don't have any pets right now but I want one.

Do you have a favorite sport?
My favorite sport to play is Volleyball, but I'm terrible at it. My favorite sport to watch is football and college basketball. I love rooting for the Redskins!

If you were not a teacher, what would you like to be?

I would be a meteorologist. I love the weather, it fascinates me.

Who is your hero, someone you really look up to?

My dad is my hero. He has always been there for me.

What is the greatest piece of advice you could give to Bells Mill students?

You are not defined by what happens to you, you are defined by how you react when things don't go the way you planned.

Nurse Notes (continued from page 5)

In addition, if the student athlete reports any of the following after a sport-related blow, they may have suffered a concussion, and need to consult with a medical professional:

1. Double or fuzzy vision
2. Confusion
3. Balance problems or dizziness
4. Feeling sluggish or slowed down

If your child displays any signs and symptoms of a possible concussion or mild traumatic brain

injury, it is important to contact a physician or a clinician as soon as possible. Research shows that if an injured athlete returns to the game and to schoolwork before they are fully recovered, it can have serious long term effects. A medical professional, like those in the Children's National Safe Concussion Outcome Recovery and Education (SCORE) program, can help you and your child athlete determine when and if it's time to get back into the game and get back to school.

PTA presidents message (continued from page 1)

We are so excited to have just wrapped up a ton of ***fantastic events including Club Bells Mill with our highest attendance ever, our Black History Program, our first annual Book Drive and Talent Show.*** It would not have been possible without our amazing chairs and volunteers. Thank you to Amy Gordon, Judy Schricker, Sharon Tzioni, Marsha Baris, Leticia Gassaway, and all of the other parents who worked hard to make these activities terrific for our children.

We're looking forward to some great end of year events including ***Ice Skating Night, Club Bells Mill and the always fun Bells Mill BASH.*** A huge thank you to all of our committee chairs and each and every volunteer for the time and commitment you have all put into making this year such an amazing success. **It takes a Village.**

Helping Children Learn[®]

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Bells Mill Elementary School



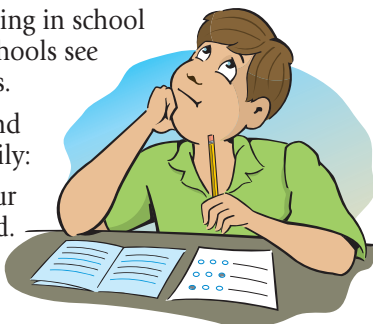
March 2011

Prepare for standardized tests

You already know that standardized tests are important. But what you might not realize is exactly *why* they're so important. Standardized test results help you see how your child is doing in school compared to his peers. And they also help schools see how they're doing compared to other schools.

But don't let that importance get to you and your child! To ease the pressure on your family:

- **Learn about upcoming tests.** Ask your child's teacher what subjects will be covered. Ask about preparation. The teacher may send home a "practice test," for example, or provide information to review.
- **Practice following directions.** When studying at home, have your child read directions carefully. Check to make sure he understands them.
- **Use a timer.** Set a timer during math homework to help your child get comfortable with "timed tests." Turn it into a game—race to see if he can complete a certain number of problems before the timer goes off.
- **Brush up on skills.** Do reading, writing and math activities at home, but go beyond the basics. Look up new words. Write about a unique topic. Make graphs.
- **Relax.** Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and nutritious food in the days leading up to a test. Provide happy distractions from stress, such as family walks.
- **Understand the results.** Find out how the scores will be used. How might a particularly low or high score affect a student?



Source: "Standardized Test Success," Family Education, <http://school.familyeducation.com/educational-testing/teaching-methods/37502.html>.



Rate your response at report-card time

Report cards inform parents about their children's progress in school. At report card time do you:

- **Remain calm?** If you're upset about poor grades, wait until you cool down to talk with your child or her teacher.
- **Ask what your child thinks?** Does she agree with the grades she received? Why or why not?
- **Develop a plan?** Even if your child has all A's, there will

be some things she wants to improve.

- **Contact the teacher** if you have questions or concerns? Together, work out a way to help your child improve.

During the next grading period review your child's work regularly. Report cards won't be a surprise if you check homework each day.

Source: Ball State University, "How to Handle Report Cards—The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," www.newswise.com/articles/view/510639.

Don't tolerate disrespect

Children who are expected to be respectful at home treat classmates and teachers with respect at school. *Never* tolerate disrespectful behavior. Say, "We don't talk like that in our family. Take five minutes to cool off. Then we can talk about what's upsetting you."

Organized students may have better attendance

Students who miss just one day of school each week miss more than two and a half years of class time before they graduate. And most lost hours of instruction can never be made up. Common excuses for absences and tardiness include:

- **Getting up late** and missing the bus.
- **Forgetting** an assignment at home.
- **Not being able** to find needed books.



These excuses have one thing in common: disorganization! Encourage your child to stick to a steady homework routine, pack her backpack the night before and wake up at the same time every day.

Source: "School Attendance: Helping Your Child Make the Best Start," www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/YourChildsWelfareAtSchool/DG_067554.

Spring into gardening fun!

Spring is just around the corner. For some seasonal fun that teaches responsibility, allow your child to pick out some seeds, like marigolds or radishes.



Help your child plant his seeds in potting soil and place his pots in a sunny spot. Expect him to be responsible for the watering and care of the plants.



How can parents show the importance of hard work?

Q: My daughter's teacher says she does the bare minimum at school—and her grades reflect her lack of effort. If I ask her to do anything at home, it takes so much nagging it's easier to do it myself. How can I help my child develop a work ethic?

A: There's a saying that the parent has to teach the child how to work before the teacher can teach the child how to learn. Clearly, your daughter hasn't learned that first lesson—and as a result, her teacher is having trouble with the second! Here's what to do:



- **Rule out any health issues** first. Then start helping her develop a good work ethic. Household chores are a great way to do this.
- **Hold a family meeting.** Explain to your daughter that she is an important part of your family. You need her to do her share. "Dad's busy at work. I have a new job. We need your help." Putting it this way will make chores seem important and not like a punishment. They're actually a way to make the household run more smoothly. First, have her work with you. When you're fixing dinner, have her tear the lettuce. When you fold laundry, have her help. Later, she can do some chores on her own.
- **Be sure to share your thanks** and show your gratitude. Say, "You really helped our family." That praise will make her want to do more.



Are you supporting independent work?

Every child asks for help once in a while. But if your child asks for it every day, you may need to help him become more independent. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging self-reliance:

- ___ **1. Do you let** your child know you believe he's capable? "I know it's hard. But you've done hard things before."
- ___ **2. Do you help** your child break big projects into smaller pieces?
- ___ **3. Do you remind** your child of the importance of effort? "You couldn't ride a bike the first time you tried. But you kept at it. You'll learn this if you keep at it."
- ___ **4. Do you ask** your child questions when he gets stuck? "What did you learn when you read the chapter?"

- ___ **5. Do you try** to keep your child motivated with an occasional small treat?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child learn how to work on his own. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The greatest oak was once a little nut who held its ground."
—Author Unknown

Celebrate the joy of reading

Who can resist Dr. Seuss? From *The Cat in the Hat* to *Horton Hears a Who!* every child loves the rhymes and the whimsy found in his books. To celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2nd:

- **Choose books** that both you and your child will enjoy. Ask your librarian to recommend titles.
- **Use funny voices.** Your child will love it when you use a squeaky voice for a mouse or a really deep voice for an elephant.
- **Take turns.** If your child struggles, read the page first. Then have him read the same page.

Spend dinner time with family, not the television

According to one survey, more than half of all people watch TV while they eat dinner.

But experts know that dinner table conversations matter. It's a time when families can connect. Ask about your child's day. Tell funny stories. Regular table talk can keep the lines of communication open.

Stay connected with school

Research shows that when parents and schools work together, children are more likely to succeed in school.

Be sure to:

- **Review** homework. Ask your child about school every day.
- **Check out** the school website. Find out about resources provided for parents.
- **Tell** the teacher if you suspect your child is struggling with schoolwork.



Source: National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, www.ncpie.org.

Helping Children Learn®

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Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. ~Elizabeth Andrew

The PTA would like to say thank you to all of the volunteers who make our school such a wonderful place to learn, share and grow.

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Dates to remember

- March 16 Ledo's Night
- March 26 Club Bells Mill; "Carnival"
- March 30 3rd marking period ends
- March 31 No School Professional Day
- April 1 Science Fair
- April 5 7:15pm PTA Meeting
- April 7 Report cards distributed
- April 12 Ledo's Night
- April 14,15 Kindergarten Orientation
- April 18-25 No School Spring Break.
- May 3 7:15pm, PTA Meeting
- May 2-6 Staff Appreciation Week
- May 5 Staff Luncheon
- May 6 International Night

The Bells Mill Beacon
March 2011

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