



Ben Franklin Herald

DECEMBER 2009

Benjamin Franklin Elementary School
Fax: 724 465-1070

Phone: 724 465-5637

CLASSROOM NEWS

From the Principal

Happy holidays! I hope that you had a peaceful Thanksgiving break. It's great to see that the true spirit of giving is alive and well! The "Love Basket" was another huge success this year! I have special thanks, as well as a great debt of gratitude to our entire school community for your generosity toward those in need. It truly makes Thanksgiving a memorable and meaningful holiday when we know we reached our goal!

As winter inevitably will arrive, I ask that you please make sure that your children are dressed appropriately for the cold weather. We also recommend that you are aware of the daily weather reports as they might provide an early indication for delays and potential cancellations.

We are excited about the assessment data our recent NWEA tests provide in regard to reading and math performance. This local assessment will be administered again in the spring, along with standard elements within the curriculum that enable us to measure student learning. We truly appreciate your patience and support as we are striving to find new ways to improve student learning with the use of meaningful assessment tools like NWEA.

I want to say thank you for all of those who helped organize the fantastic Veterans' Day programs for our school. Our guest speakers, the classroom performances, readers, and music, both instrumental as well as vocal were simply moving. I owe a huge thank you to our parent volunteers for pulling this all together. We couldn't do this event without a total team effort!

In closing, I extend my best wishes for you and yours this holiday season!

Sincerely, Mr. Minnick

School Closings and Delays

When weather is severe enough to warrant a school delay or closing, announcements can be heard on several local radio stations: WCCS (1160 AM), KDKA (1020 AM), or WQMU (92.5 FM). The announcement will state "Indiana Area School District" and includes all schools in the district. Please do not call the school. Our phone lines need to remain open to receive emergency information.

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten has been busy bees in November! We participated in the Veterans' Day assembly, finished our unit on the five senses, and prepared for the Thanksgiving holiday. We will be participating in the Teddy Bear fund drive as well as taking an imaginary trip around the world as we celebrate December holidays. We wish your family a wonderful holiday season!



FIRST GRADE

First grade will be busy with many activities in December. In Reading we will continue to read stories in our Treasures anthology. Your child is working on building words and word families, such as cat, hat, and mat that rhyme. We will be learning about our Heartwood attribute HOPE. In Math we are learning to measure, practicing telling time to the hour and half-hour, counting money and telling number stories. There are many school activities we will also participate in such as Santa's Workshop, making our blue snowman turn white via monetary donations and bringing in gloves, mittens and hats for our Caring Tree. In Social Studies, we are teaching the children about Mexico and it's culture. Please remember to listen to your child read books to you from the read book bags, as we are developing our reading skills.

SECOND GRADE

The children in 2nd grade have been focusing their math skills on four topics:

- Numeration and place value
- Money
- Telling time
- Data collection and analysis

These concepts and skills are developed and expanded over time. It is suggested that some follow-up be done at home, especially with counting money and telling time. The children should be able to show a given amount of money in a variety of ways. For \$0.25, the children could show a quarter, two dimes and a nickel, or five nickels. They can show various amounts for money up to \$1.00. Have the children tell you the time on an analog clock rather than a digital one. Practicing all of these skills will help your child in the coming months in math. We build upon this basic knowledge.

THIRD GRADE

Classes are currently putting the finishing touches on their math addition unit and will now be exploring subtraction concepts and facts. We have also completed our language arts theme, Investigations. Our next theme will focus on Discoveries. We will also continue learning about the Southwest Native Americans.



FOURTH GRADE

During the month of December in reading class students will be working on writing their own version of "The 12 Days of Christmas." Also, students will continue to read stories from the Treasure series about Ben Franklin, and a story called "Dear Mr. Winston." They will complete related activities. The social studies class will continue to study the northeast states. Along with the state location and capital recognition, the students will begin a research project on lighthouses. We also hope to hear back from "The Great Mail Race" schools that we wrote letters to. We also hope to begin electricity and magnetism in science if time permits. In math the students are focusing on multiplying one digit times two or three digits. It is impressive to see how many students have taken the time to learn the basic multiplication facts. Way to go! For those that haven't yet mastered them, you are encouraged to keep working toward mastery.

FIFTH GRADE

In math during December students will build division sense and understanding of the division algorithm for whole numbers and decimals with 2 digit divisors. Students will also use new strategies to solve problems.

In reading, students will be working in Unit 3 of the Treasures Series. The theme of this unit is Turning Points. Various skills including drawing conclusions, identifying facts/opinions, and comparing and contrasting will be practiced in class. We will continue working on reading strategies.

In science, students will be continuing to study various types of movement made possible by the interaction of our muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems, and comparing different factors that affect motion on earth and in space.

SIXTH GRADE

December is upon us! Sixth grade will participate in the **Santa's Workshop** provided by the PTA to purchase gifts for family members and friends **December 3rd and 4th**.

They will woo us at the **Holiday Choral and Band Concert** on **December 9th**. They will also try to help the school meet our **Children's Hospital fund drive** goal with the opportunity to participate in several **Sixth Grade Auctions**. What fun! Don't forget to continue working on the **Family History Projects** as you encounter family over holiday gatherings. The project due date is Tuesday, January 12th. Happy holidays to all our sixth grade families.



ESL

The English as a Second Language Department held an ESL Family Night on November 12 at Eisenhower Elementary School. ESL parents shared food representing their culture. Students shared their talents and academic work. One of our fifth graders, Kathleen Tra, provided entertainment for all with a piano solo. Approximately 75 ESL students, parents, and invited guests were in attendance.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

December is an exciting month here at Ben Franklin. Students are preparing for the holidays, participating in the Teddy Bear Fund Drive, and enjoying the end of 2009. Guidance lessons for students in the primary grades have been focusing on tattling. Students are learning the difference between tattling and telling/reporting. Guidance lessons for the students in the intermediate grades will focus on accepting differences in others. This is a great time of year to teach children that everyone is different and unique.

I would like to wish everyone a happy holiday season!

H1N1 Update: The Purple Form

If your child is receiving an H1N1 vaccination at the senior high school on Wednesday, December 2nd, they will receive "a purple form." This half sheet purple form is documentation that your child received the vaccination. The form is to be given to your family doctor who will place it in your child's medical records. If you did not see the form, please check your child's book bag and pockets, hopefully you will find it there. Thank you for your prompt attention and participation throughout this entire process.

K-Kids



"We Build"

LOVE BASKET

Thank you to everyone who donated for Love Basket! We were able to raise 1,844 food items and a local company, who wishes to remain anonymous, donated the remaining items to meet our goal of 3,500 items!

The K-Kids have made clay ornaments to be raffled off again this year with the money from the raffle going to the Teddy Bear Fund Drive for Children's Hospital. Raffle tickets will cost 25 cents each and be sold in the lobby December 14-18. The winning tickets will be drawn Friday, December 18 at 3:00pm.

The K-Kids wish the entire Ben Franklin Family a wonderful Holiday Season!

Ms. Helm and Ms. Zacherl

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In December, students will continue to work on their ball skills. We will be using various types of balls to work on dribbling, passing, shooting hoops, throwing and batting a ball. We will also be playing games such as 4 Square, Basketball and activities with a large cage ball.

We will also be hosting the Elks Free Throw Shooting Competition this month. Information will be sent home with students who are interested in the competition in the next few weeks.

ART

Kindergartners are making pinch pots using clay (Shhh...they might be keeping it a secret. Some plan to give them as Christmas presents.), while first graders sculpted clay bells, which they'll ring while singing a song for the school. Second graders have been creating radial designs, like what you might see in a kaleidoscope. Third graders are learning about abstract art and drawing an abstract self-portrait. Fourth graders are using the slab hand-building clay technique to create an Egyptian sarcophagus. Fifth graders are busy drawing their grid self-portraits. Sixth grade is continuing a printmaking lesson using linoleum.

Technology

Need a holiday gift idea? The program our students use to learn proper keyboarding technique is available online.

You will need to log on to

<http://www.smartkidssoftware.com/ndsun3.htm>

This is actually a newer version than we use in class, so the lesson/practice sequences follow a world history theme, rather than the outer space theme we follow in class.

Speedskins are also available, but boxer shorts work well. Place the shorts over the keyboard, with the waistband at the top. Put the left hand through the left leg opening and the right hand through the right leg opening. You now have a creative alternative that will help your child keep their eyes focused on the monitor.

NURSE

Later this month, all parents will receive a letter with their child's Body Mass Index (BMI) percentile. Body Mass Index is calculated using height and weight measurements. Then a percentile is determined based on your child's age and gender. The BMI percentile is used as a screening tool to determine if your child is at risk for being overweight or underweight. Please remember that this is only a screening tool and not a definitive measure of overweight or underweight. Some children may have a higher than normal BMI percentile if they have a muscular build because muscle weighs more than fat. Please call me with any questions concerning this screening program.

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

Parents' Night Out is a project where parents can drop off their children at the Sr. high for three hours and finish up some last minute holiday shopping or enjoy an evening with friends or a spouse. Children can enjoy a night that

includes dinner, movie, games, and crafts. Key Club is sponsoring this event and will have many club members aiding in a safe, fun night. It will be held Friday, December 18, 2009 from 6PM to 9PM. Permission forms are in the office if you are interested.

STUDENT COUNCIL

Student Council held the first movie night of the year in November. Approximately 150 students participate in the activity. A special "thank-you" to all the teachers and parents that volunteered their time to help make Movie Night such a success.

Student Council also helped K-Kids with the Love Basket collection. We met our goal of 3500 items! Congratulations to 2nd grade for winning the Spirit Points. Second grade brought in 367 items for the collection!!! During the month of December the students at Ben Franklin will help those less fortunate by collecting money for the annual Teddy Bear Fund Drive. Please look for additional information to follow.

Have a Wonderful, Holiday Season!!!!

PTA

everychild.onevoice.



SECRET SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Santa's Workshop will be held this year on Thursday, Dec. 3, and Friday, Dec. 4. Students can shop during their class's assigned time. There will be great items in a variety of price ranges, starting as low as 25 cents. Once again, each child will be provided \$3 for spending, courtesy of the PTA and 84 Fundraising Services. Envelopes for sending in additional money will be going home prior to the workshop. Any questions? Please call Andrea Ebeling at 724-463-8248 or Amanda Owens at 724-349-0272. Happy Holidays!

REFUNDING

We will be finishing up our contest December 15th. A winning classroom will be announced the following week and will be getting a Pizza Party. Please remember to send in your labels by the 15th. Thank you for continuing to send them in as we can do wonderful things for the school with the money and points we earn. Any questions please call me, Melissa, at 724-349-5583. Happy Holidays.

Valentine Planning Meeting

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, January 12, 2010. This will be the date of the next Homeroom Planning Meeting. We will meet at 6:30 pm in the school cafeteria to plan for the Valentine's Day parties in the classroom.

PTA REFLECTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS to our students for creating such amazing art projects! We had an enjoyable evening on November 5th with a gallery show of the artwork and an awards presentation.

Many thanks to Mrs. Bruner and the custodians for helping with arrangements, Mr. Minnick and Donna Swatsworth for speaking at our Awards Night, and Ms. Zacherl for stopping by.

And the winners are...

Visual Arts

Primary (K-2nd grade):

1st: Anna Margita
2nd Hanin Ghanam
3rd Alexis Smathers
Honorable Mention: Hanin Ghanam,
Hunter Smathers

Intermediate (3rd-5th grade):

1st Kallie Kocinski
2nd Ellen Simmerman
3rd Noor Ghanam
Honorable Mention: Grace Margita (2)

Photography

Primary (K-2nd grade):

1st Chloe Kocinski
2nd Nathan Birch
3rd Madison Palmer
Honorable Mention: Alexis Smathers (2),
Hunter Smathers

Intermediate Photography (3rd-5th grade):

1st Grace Margita
2nd Grace Margita
3rd Carlie Glavach
Honorable Mention: Vince Birch,
Sarah Coffman (2), Kallie Kocinski (2), Sandra
Shanshala (3), David Simmerman,
Breanna Smathers

Middle/Junior High (6th grade):

1st Ben Strong
2nd Joey Cook
3rd Ben Strong
Honorable Mention: Joey Cook (3),
Ben Strong (5)

Literature

Primary (K-2nd grade):

1st Avery Redd
2nd Hanin Ghanam

Intermediate (3rd-5th grade):

1st Kallie Kocinski
2nd Angel Redd
3rd Breanna Smathers
Honorable Mention: Nikki Clawson,
Sarah Coffman, Noor Ghanam

Film Production

Intermediate (3rd-5th grade):

1st Kara Gibbon

The First, Second and Third Place projects have been sent on to the next level of PTA competition. Stop by the school lobby and see the display of all the Honorable Mention winning projects.

Would your child like to participate next year? It is easy and fun. The theme will be "Together We Can". They can draw or paint a picture, take a photograph, or write a poem or story. Everyone is a winner!

Lynn Simmerman and Dana Smathers

FUNDRAISER

Thank you to everyone who supported the PTA through our fall fundraiser. Without your participation in our fundraisers, PTA would not be able to provide all the programs we have scheduled. If you were unable to participate in the fall fundraiser, Market Day is a fundraiser available on a monthly basis that also supports the PTA. Cash donations may also be made at any time. Thank you to the many volunteers who have given their time this fall. We appreciate all of the help and support everyone gives the PTA! Happy Holidays!

Donna Swatsworth
PTA President

2010 PTA Meetings - These scheduled meetings are where PTA conducts its monthly business and planning. They are open meetings and everyone is invited to attend.

February 9 @ 6:30 pm

March 9 @ 6:30 pm

April 13 @ 6:30 pm

May 11 @ 6:30 pm

Something new!

Check out the last page of the parent bulletin! We are going to try adding a calendar page each month including school activities, days off, and special events.