



Ben Franklin Herald

March 2010

Mr. Michael Minnick, Principal
Benjamin Franklin Elementary School

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From the Principal

Hello families and friends! It is great to be back into a normal weekly routine after so many weather-related disruptions to the typical schedule. In a way, I find myself somewhat amazed at the fact that we are at this stage of the school year (already). As we prepare for the goings-on of March, I cannot help but think of the frenetic pace of the fourth quarter that is quickly approaching.

PSSA: The testing window for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment will open the second week of April, but it is never too early to practice basic skills with your child so that they demonstrate their best work. Basic facts practice in mathematics, time and money, measurement and geometric shapes are all around us in every aspect of our world. Simply pointing these out and taking advantage of the many teachable moments will help your child's confidence and help them show their best work.

OLWEUS: Our core team at Ben Franklin has completed three days of training, but much more work lies ahead. We look forward to successfully planning, launching and sustaining this bully prevention program at the start of the 2010 – 2011 school year.

Student Drop-offs/Parking: Thank you for your response to my effort to improve the safety of our children in the student drop off zone. Cars are passing through much more slowly and safely and above all, children have a safe passage from their family's car to the school's entrance.

NWEA: This local assessment, used to monitor student learning and progress in the areas of reading and mathematics has completed its winter testing window. The final testing for the 2009 – 2010 school year will commence during the month of May.

Spelling Bee: Classroom bees will be conducted during the month of March and our building level bee (grades 5 and 6) will be held April 22nd beginning at 9:30 in the Ben Franklin gym/multi-purpose room.

In closing, I leave you with these inspirational words:

"Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true."

-Leon J. Suenes

-- Mr. Minnick

Kindergarten Registration

This year kindergarten registration will be held during the week of April 19. At Ben Franklin specifically, it will take place on Monday, April 19 and the morning of Tuesday, April 20. If you or someone you know needs a kindergarten packet to complete in advance, please call the school office to make sure we have the updated registration packets ready for pick up, as it will save you time on the day of registration if most of your paper work is complete. The process takes approximately 30-45 minutes. Please be sure to bring the child's birth certificate, something with your address on, the child's immunization records and of course, the child!

Homeroom Placements for 2010-2011

Homeroom placements for next year will soon be discussed and determined. Our teachers will carefully consider each child's educational and social needs when making these decisions. If parents wish to offer educational information specific to your child's learning needs, you are asked to send your written input to Mr. Minnick by Thursday, April 1, 2010.

CLASSROOM NEWS

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten studied heart health, dental health, and nutrition. We celebrated the 100th day of school! It's amazing how time flies! We also studied various presidents during this short month. The Valentine parties were wonderful. A big thank you to our homeroom parents. Soon we will start learning about dinosaurs.

FIRST GRADE

First grade is looking forward to spring! During the month of March we will learn number facts in math by using fact triangles. It is important that children know their number facts to 20 before entering second grade. The bottom line is we must still memorize the facts... just as our parents and grandparents did! In reading, we are beginning our next book in Treasures, which concentrates on nature: weather, birds, recycling, and scientists. These are some of the topics we will read about.

SECOND GRADE

Second graders are excited about learning *cursive* handwriting. To them, this is a first step to a more grown-up method of writing. The children began by learning the lower case letters. They will then learn the capital letters. It is important for the children to follow the pattern that they are learning in school for the proper formation of the letters. The Peterson Method of handwriting is taught, which may be somewhat different than the style of writing you learned as a child or use as an adult. This is why we ask you to have your child only practice the letters as we learn them. If a letter is taught at home in a different way, it is much more difficult for the child to relearn it the Peterson way. It is important that the children practice their cursive writing not only now but also throughout the summer. For the first few weeks of 3rd grade, the children will be able to print their work. Later, the children will do all of their work in *cursive*. This can be quite a transition if they have been out of practice for some time. Therefore, it is important for them to continue to practice cursive writing during their summer vacation.

Please stress using neat handwriting at home by checking the way that the children complete their homework. If it is not done in a neat manner, let the child know how important it is to do their best handwriting on their work. You may want to have them redo the paper if it is not done neatly. We often tell the children that handwriting is taught so that their writing can be improved in all subject areas, not just handwriting class. Your help in this is greatly appreciated.

THIRD GRADE

February has been another busy month. We've been working to learn multiplication facts and then applying them to division. Some of the concepts the math fraction unit will explore include equivalent fractions, comparing and ordering fractions, and finding a fraction of a number. Our reading activities have been focused on determination; persevere to meet your goals. The next collection of stories will examine how people face challenges. Our health unit this month will focus on disease and the human body.

FOURTH GRADE

The fourth grade will be visiting the Carnegie Museum of Natural History on March 26. A guided tour of selected parts of the museum will be included for our visit. Students will need to arrive at school between 7:45 and 8:00AM. Each student received a permission slip and health form to be completed and returned along with \$3 for the trip. Thanks to the PTA for providing the remainder of the admission cost for each student! In Math we will be finishing division the first week of March. Our next area of focus will be Geometry including polygons, angles, symmetry, quadrilaterals, area, and perimeter.

In social studies the students will continue to study state regions. They will be studying the Middle West states along with their state locations and capital recognition. In science, the 4th graders will be starting weather. They will be making their own weather instruments and creating weather maps. During the month of March the students will be reading a book about an animal on their own. They will be completing a book report here at school during the first week of April. Reading classes will also continue to read stories from the Signatures series, and complete related activities.

FIFTH GRADE

In the weeks ahead, the fifth graders will be extending their study of fractions, decimals, and percents. We will be adding and subtracting fractions with like and unlike denominators, as well as mixed numbers with renaming and regrouping. The students will also be exploring linear measurement with feet, yards, and miles. Our problem solving work will include working with problems containing too much information or too little information, exact or estimate, times to over or under estimate, and patterns.

During the month of March students will be increasing their fluency and their skills in answering open-ended questions. The reading selections will vary and opportunities will be provided to make inferences, identify cause/effect, generate questions, and identify word origins.

We will be continuing our Food Chemistry Unit in science. The students are observing different common foods using sight, smell, and touch. The students are also testing foods for different nutrients.

SIXTH GRADE

Our big event for the month of March is our trip to Washington, DC, which is scheduled for Friday, March 26th. Students will be reading *Daniel's Story* in preparation for the Holocaust Museum visit. The regular Social Studies classes have also prepared the students for the remaining stops on our itinerary. Also, the homeroom spelling bees will take place mid-March as the Ben Franklin building bee is slated for early April. It is a busy month. Buckle your seatbelts! The Junior High is just around the corner.

NURSE

March is National Nutrition Month! This is a good time to evaluate if your family is eating nutritious meals. Try the following suggestions for promoting good eating habits.

- Be a healthy role model for your children. Sometimes parents tell their children to eat healthy food, but they don't follow the advice for themselves.
- Encourage your children to eat breakfast every day and eat breakfast with them.
- Add more fruits and vegetables to your meals. Choose fruits and vegetables that are in season in a variety of colors.
- Allow your children to help plan and prepare nutritious meals. Children are more willing to eat items that they help to prepare.

Choose water or low fat milk instead of soda and sports drinks that are high in sugar and may promote tooth decay.

ART

Kindergarten is beginning a drawing unit which will include self-portraits, animals, and people in motion, while first graders are adding color to their self-portraits. Second graders are traveling to Australia and are creating a boomerang with a dotted design. After some impressive sewing, third graders are finishing their ugly dolls and are adding details, such as faces and clothing. Fourth graders are drawing Greek Vessels which they will use for a printmaking project. Fifth graders will begin their paintings with sculptural qualities inspired by American artist Frank Stella, as sixth graders sculpt vessels using clay coils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In March, we will be starting a unit that will involve station work. We will have stations for rock wall climbing, still walking, basic gymnastics skills and jump roping. Students in grades 3 through 6 will also be creating their own gymnastics routine in small groups. In a few weeks, students in grades 3 through 6 will also be receiving information about the Jump Rope For Heart Fundraiser. This is a great fund raiser to support the American Heart

STUDENT COUNCIL

Student Council will continue to have monthly meeting concerning upcoming events and past events. In the month of February, Student Council was excited to help with the Battle of the Faculties. The Ben Franklin teachers placed 5th among all of the participating schools. A huge thank-you to all of the students, parents, and teachers for helping raise money for Hopeful Hearts.

Looking ahead...we will begin to brainstorm ideas for the school carnival that will be coming up in April. We are excited to try something new at Ben Franklin Elementary!

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Students in grades 3 through 6 will participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The following subject areas will be assessed:

April 7-16: Reading and Math (Grades 3 through 6)

April 19-23: Writing (Grade 5)

April 26-30: Science (Grade 4)

It is extremely important that your child attends school during these testing windows. Please make every effort to avoid making appointments during these times. If illness occurs, make-up sessions will be provided.

Additional information will be sent home during the month of March.

Technology

Did you ever wonder why keyboarding is taught starting in fourth grade? "Most research supports starting students on formal keyboarding around grade 4," says Theresa Tovey, occupational therapist in Region #4 (Chester, Deep River, and Essex) in Connecticut. "All kids do not have the eye-hand motor coordination to learn keyboarding skills earlier than that." That's not to say nothing can be done with keyboarding before grade 4, however. K-3 students can also get familiar with the keyboard. Encourage your children to pretend there's a line down the middle of the keyboard and to keep the right hand to the right of the line and the left hand to the left. Also encourage them to type with more than one finger, because they may tend to use just the index finger. If students are able to use more than one finger early on, they will have an easier time when formal instruction starts in fourth grade.

READING COUNCIL

On behalf of the Indiana Reading Council I would like to let you know about two events being sponsored by the Council, The Indiana Gazette, and the Indiana Free Library. The first is the "Read Across Indiana Book Drive" where new or gently used books are being collected for distribution in the area. There will be collection boxes in the lobby here at Ben Franklin

throughout the month of March. The second event is "Hidden Treasures at the Library" which is a variety of activities at the Indiana Free Library on Saturday, March 27 from 10AM to 1PM. Please consider participating in one or both of these worthwhile events to promote literacy in our community! Lori Laverick

K-Kids



"We Build"

Thank you to everyone who purchased Secret Valentine's!

Come with an appetite to the Academic Project Fair on March 10, 2010.

The K-Kids will be hosting the concession stand and selling Popcorn, hotdogs and lemonade.

Watch for more information!



MARKET DAY

Ben Franklin PTA made a profit of approximately \$200 from February's Market Day sales. For the upcoming March sale we had a Dessert Fundraiser contest. The class with the most profit will receive a snack party provided by Market Day and Ben Franklin PTA. Thank you to everyone who purchases Market Day and also to all the volunteers who help with delivery every month. If you haven't tried it, please take a minute to look over the order form. There are many quality items for you and your family. Ordering Market Day is easy. You can order every month or only when you choose to. There is no pressure to buy something every month. Ways to Order Market Day:

1. Fill out Market Day flier that is sent home with your child & send it back to school.
2. Order on-line (www.marketday.com) and pay on-line.
3. Order on-line (www.marketday.com) and pay in person on the day of the sale. Cash, check, EBT, money order, and VISA/MC accepted.

An advantage to ordering on-line is the ability to order clearance items. Every month Market Day offers many items marked down to great prices as clearance.

These items are only available on-line. Anyone having

questions about Market Day please call Stacy Kovalchick at 724-354-4629.

ATTENTION 6TH GRADE PARENTS

The 6th grade activity will be held on May 7th. We have a lot of planning to do. Please attend the next meeting on Tuesday March 16th at 6:30. If you are interested in helping. We need parents to help with decorations, food planning, invitations, setting up and cleaning up. If you are unable to attend the meeting please call Stacy at 724-354-4276 or Kelly at 724-464-0421.

Thank you,
Activity committee

ACADEMIC PROJECT FAIR

The 2010 Academic Project Fair is Wednesday March 10, 2010. Tables will be placed throughout our halls to display the classroom projects from March 8th – 12th. Individual projects will be on display in the school cafeteria the evening of March 10th from 6:00 – 8:00 pm.

This year's fair will ***not accept projects that include live animals***. A scientific method/format will be required for each presentation. First, students interested in submitting a project need to complete the form given by the teachers and return it to the school office no later than February 23rd, 2010.

Parents and students are invited to enjoy all the projects on display throughout the school the evening of March 10th from 6:00 - 8:00 PM.

We are truly excited about the potential for this evening! Please contact Mrs. Kunselman or Mr. Minnick if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!

The PTA Spirit Sale will be coming soon! Look for order forms to be sent home with students in the next coming weeks. Orders will be in for the spring.

Scholastic Book Fair

Mark your Calendars for the Scholastic Book Fair being held in the Ben Franklin School Lobby April 27th-30th.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Ben Franklin and Eisenhower Elementary PTA's are pleased to host the annual Pint Size Hero-American Red Cross Blood Drive on Monday, March 15th from 12-6 in the Ben Franklin Gymnasium.

Save the Date

Mother/Daughter Banquet
Tuesday, March 23, 2010 6-8 pm
Ticket sale dates to be announced.

FATHER/SON BANQUET

Shannon Wood and Terri Williams co-chairs and the entire PTA wish to thank all of you who helped make the Father/Son banquet a success. "A Night in the Jungle" featured Wild World of Animals with approximately 215 fathers and sons attending. In addition to the PTA moms that helped, we would like to thank Mr. Minnick for letting us have this event, Mrs. Bruner and Mrs. Balcerak for the extra ticket sales, Bob and Dale for their custodial services, Ms. Zacherl for providing the paper for the tables and to Scott Cunningham – Cunningham Meats for catering such a wonderful dinner.

Think Spring Concert - Saturday, March 13, 2010 from 7-9 pm at the Indiana Area Junior High School. Come join us for a new and different type of fundraiser that's an evening of fun and entertainment! Enjoy the music of the Ben Franklin Singers, the Ben Franklin Jazz Band, Mark Garrick and The Vogues. All proceeds benefit the Ben Franklin PTA and the Ben Franklin Technology Club. Advanced tickets are only \$10 and tickets at the door are \$12. Send your check payable to "Ben Franklin PTA" into the office or call 724-388-0034 for more information.

March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 <i>Read Across America Day</i>	3	4	5	6 <i>Basketball Tournament</i>
7	8 <i>Market Day delivery</i>	9 <i>PTA Meeting 6:30PM</i>	10 <i>Academic Project Fair 6-8</i>	11	12 <i>Early Dismissal Day 11:45</i>	13 <i>Think Spring Concert</i>
14	15 <i>PTA Blood Drive in Gym</i>	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 <i>Mother/Daughter Banquet 6PM</i>	24	25	26 <i>4th grade to Carnegie 6th gr. to DC</i>	27
28	29	30	31 <i>3rd gr. To Heinz History Center</i>			