

# The Bear Essentials - News You Can Use!

I can't believe it's February already! Time is flying by! Of course, time passes quickly when you're doing something you love...

We welcomed lots of new faculty members this week. Thanks to Title funds, the following folks will be helping us with interventions: our own Diana Diazgranados & Carolann Brown will be shifting/expanding their duties to aid our kindergartners and 1st graders. The familiar faces of Asa Valente & Rita McCormack will return half-time each to support our 2nd & 3rd graders. Our wonderful subs—Emmett Dupree & Heather Parnell will become part-time faculty members & will work with our 4th & 5th graders. Due to these changes, we are also able to hire Amy Parsons to return to the PE position she held last year and Rosario Madison to provide interpretation/translation & clerical services. We are so excited to have each of these professionals join our team to foster our children's learning. Welcome all!

Tuesday morning's Muffins with McLeod-focusing on test score interpretation—was very well attended. If you missed it and still have questions about your child's ITBS or CogAT results, feel free to call (770-446-0947) or email (fa\_mcleod@gwinnett.k12.ga.us) me.

On Tuesday afternoon, I met with the third group of grade level teachers to work on class lists for next year. We take this very seriously. During our first round of meetings, each grade level gathers to develop heterogeneous classes that are balanced by reading level, gender and needy students. During our second round of meetings, we invite special areas, ESOL, gifted, special ed teachers and our counselors to look at each class and make sure each provides a great environment that nurtures every individual student. We also check to make sure every student has someone they know in the class. On the third round of meetings, we arrange students matching them with teachers with whom they will work best. Parent input forms are reviewed. We read EVERY parent input form to assure we are taking into account parents' input. Please make sure you share your insight with us and return this form by 2/24. Thanks! We finish this process in early May. It is arduous but we feel truly makes for a better learning experience for our children.

Wednesday began our new month. Did you know February is National Dental Month, National Heart Month and National African American Month?

I haven't had a chance recently to thank our tireless and essential café volunteers. Their presence is such a present to our school and our children as they help assure our students safety in the café. Hats off to Mary Mansfield, Joy Williams, Beth Gilbert, Maribel Duran, John Celata, Latisha Blake, Sandra Sanchez, Paul Johnson, and Leah Scharff.

This morning I had the privilege to meet with the PTA Nominating Committee. Thanks Marshauna Graves, John Giobetti and Cari Johnson for tackling this very important job! Now is the time of year that PTA is setting up for next year. We need folks to share their time for the good of our children. You may be able to give a lot of time or just a little. Both are appreciated...and we have spots that you could fill the need—from a short-term volunteer to a committee chair to a PTA officer. I know we all want our children to have the best school experience possible. To do this—we need your help! Please let me know what you can do with PTA next year to assure a great Berkeley Lake experience for your child. Many hands make light work. If we all pitch in, it won't be too much for anyone.

Great Atlanta Christian also visited Berkeley Lake this morning to check out our Reading Paws program. Thanks to the Hiller family, Berkeley Lake has the most successful reading therapy dog program in the county and GACS wanted to take notes.

In addition, I had the opportunity to host my monthly school tours today. I love sharing all things Berkeley Lake with interested parties. If you have friends who are curious about our school, encourage them to join me the first Friday of the month at 10AM.

Midterm grades are in your Friday folders today. Please take some time to review these with your child. If they aren't what you were hoping to see, set a goal together and make a plan of how your child can achieve that goal. Working together really does make a difference. Don't forget, you don't need to wait for midterms—you can access your child's grades 24/7 with the Parent Portal.

Tomorrow morning, our 5th grade teachers will again hold the Writing Institute. We have 76 student reservations for this remediation/enrichment opportunity. Thanks to those students and teachers for going the extra mile to improve writing.

Next week will be another happening one! First, it is Boy Scout anniversary week. I had the honor to help Pack 650 earn a Beltloop last week. We have many of our young men involved in this great program that supports our school in a multitude of service-oriented ways—including two Eagle Scout candidates who are working on our café art project and a raised garden bed project. My hat is off to the Scouts!

Next Monday, after school, our monthly faculty committees will meet. My committee, the scheduling committee, will hold its second session working on the overall school schedule for next year. I'm sharing this with you to let you know how much thought and work our wonderful teachers put into assuring that your child's school time is optimized to really best support learning.

Next Tuesday, Mr. Carter, our new Title I Data Administrator, will be holding Title Document Review Open Houses at 7:30AM and 5:30PM. These are opportunities for you to come in and check out our school's Title documents that our parent/faculty committee has worked on so diligently. Thanks again to this committee: Amanda Helmstetter, Sara Woolley, Evette Blankinship, Stacy & Rob Zehnder, Evelia Ruiz, Soledad Ruiz, Grant Shih, Diana Diazgranados, Candy Steventon, Neeka Hughes, Susan Webb, Lori Newman, Lorraine Mack, Mary Anne Sheppard, Laura Marantz, Karen Griffith, and Linda Asilo.

Next Tuesday evening is the first of our Fine Arts Nights. Our 3rd graders will be dazzling us with song & dance. Ms. Burt & Ms. Birozes tell me we are going to be awed. The show starts at 6:30PM with Helland, Tolar/Baek, Evans, Heron and Carter's classes in the gym and Peele, Guyton, Burroughs, and Tack's classes in the café. It's a Don't Miss. See you there!

Next Tuesday is also the first afternoon of our second semester Berkeley Lake After School Tutoring program. This intervention for our students will be held every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon (except during Early Release) from now through March.

Of course, next Thursday afternoon marks the start of our other after school program—Terrific Thursdays. This will also run every week from now through the end of March. We are fortunate to have faculty willing to go this extra mile to offer these very important programs to our students after working full days. Thanks staff! There are still some spots open, so make sure you fill out your enrollment form and send it in with your check.

Next Thursday will be our third School Council meeting for the year. This one will be at noon and is open to all. If you'd like to join us, please call Ms. Frey in the front office as this is a lunch meeting and we want to make sure we have



Berkeley Lake Elementary School  
Volume 4, Issue 22

February 3, 2012

## Important calendar dates :

- 2/3 Scrip Orders due
- 2/4 5th gr Saturday Writing Workshop, 8:30-10:30
- 2/6 Adult English Class
- 2/6 Strings Club
- 2/6-2/10 4th Grade Helping Hands
- 2/7 Parent Title Review Meetings—conference room at 7:30AM and 5:30 PM
- 2/7 Chess Club
- 2/7 BLAST
- 2/7 Spirit Night—Stevie B's
- 2/7 3rd grade 6:30PM—Music/Dance Program
- 2/8 Adult English Class
- 2/8 BLAST
- 2/9 School Council Meeting—noon
- 2/9 Terrific Thursdays begin
- 2/10 Pick up Scrip Orders
- 2/11 5th Gr Saturday Writing Workshop—8:30-10:30
- 2/13 Adult English Class
- 2/13 Strings
- 2/14 PTA Exec Board—7:30AM
- 2/14 Chess Club
- 2/14 BLAST
- 2/15 Adult English Class
- 2/16 Terrific Thursday
- 2/16 Box Tops Due
- 2/16 Six Flags Reading Logs Due

**Don't forget Spirit Night on Tuesday, 2/7, at Stevie B's!**

plenty to serve. This important group is an advisory council for our school providing invaluable parent and community feedback on all facets of our children's educational experience. Join us and see what we do!

All next week is our 4th grade Helping Hands campaign. Please consider donating pantry items or giving a monetary gift to support our Care Team as they help our own school's families.

Ms. Lenahan requested that I let you know we could have a need for clothing in the clinic. We could really use gently-used pants—sizes 6-12—for boys & girls. Thanks!

February is a month full of fun at Berkeley Lake. Please check the calendar above and note all that is taking place at Berkeley Lake.

Have a great weekend!

Dr. McLeod