



Ben-Hem Happenings

The Bennett-Hemenway PTO

November 2013 Newsletter



What's going on with my kid?!

Written by Ian Kelly, Principal



When young children struggle in school, many parents experience a great deal of anxiety. This is perfectly normal and understandable. Beyond the obvious reasons for concern, one of the underlying sources of anxiety is the often-ambiguous nature of the difficulties children display. Parents struggle to “figure out” what is happening for their children. This causes anxiety because, as we all

m,know, children are complex little creatures who are not always aware of or able to effectively articulate what is happening for them.

Unfortunately the overwhelming volume of “diagnostic” information that can be gathered with a quick Google search often exacerbates this anxiety. Parents (and I am perfectly guilty of this) often start reading online and the information available is vast, hard to comprehend, and often inconclusive. People and professionals have many opinions, there is an increasingly complex world of jargon and terminology, and, as we noted earlier, kids (and adults) are complicated beings.

Over the years I have worked with and counseled hundreds of families whose children struggle at times during their elementary years. These challenges span the developmental continuum and include reading, writing, math, organization skills, social skills, motor skills, communication skills, etc. In most situations these struggles are perfectly normal and with a little support they pass. These experiences ultimately serve as great learning opportunities for students (and parents). The situations in which we experienced the greatest success were those that began with communication between the home and school as opposed to the home and Google.

When a parent has a concern about their child/children, my first piece of advice is to take a deep breath and remember that there is a high probability that this difficulty is normal and will resolve itself with time or a little extra support from home and school. My second piece of advice is to get in touch with the classroom teacher immediately. Teachers are trained diagnosticians who understand development and learning and, most importantly, know the child. They are great sources of information and guidance and in most instances can support parents in developing plans to coach their children through tough spots.

Teachers also know the limits of their knowledge and expertise. Fortunately when they reach that boundary they have a team of professionals and specialists that they can

access for guidance, diagnostic support, and advice. At Ben-Hem, we call these professionals and specialists the Child Study Team (CST). This is an amazing resource for families that, unfortunately, many do not know about.

The CST is a comprehensive team of professionals who operate as a support network for students, teachers, and families. The team includes building administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, reading specialists, and behavioral analysts. The primary role of the CST is to look diagnostically at the difficulties students display, develop a clear picture of what is causing the student to struggle, and to craft recommendations and accommodations that will support the teacher and family in coaching the child through the tough spot.

If your child is experiencing any kind of difficulty in school, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your child’s teacher. If you are interested in finding out more about child study, please feel free to get in touch with me at 508.647.6580 or by email at ikelly@natickps.org.

What Should Mr. Kelly Do for \$1,000?

Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co- President

Stop & Shop has just announced their next A+ Rewards promotion. In addition to the cash rewards earned through card registrations, schools now have the opportunity to win an extra \$1,000. All we have to do is come up with a creative and fun idea for what Mr. Kelly will do for that \$1,000.

In order to have the best shot at that money, we need your help! We need your ideas for what Mr. Kelly should do to earn the extra rewards. Should Mr. Kelly dress up as Benny the Bobcat and great shoppers at our Natick Stop & Shop? Or should he perform an act at the Talent Show (in February) with our local Stop & Shop store manager? Be creative!

Send your ideas to kfernandes@benhempto.org by Friday, December 13. Mr. Kelly will then review the ideas and select the best one to be submitted for our school to Stop & Shop A+ Rewards. The person with the winning idea will receive a Ben-Hem magnet and color-changing water bottle.

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SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Holiday Fair

Written by Jen Little, PTO Co-Vice President

On Friday, November 22, holiday music filled the halls of Ben-Hem for the newly expanded Holiday Fair. This was the first year that the Annual Holiday Fair was combined with the Scholastic Book Fair and Frozen Treat night.



Families enjoyed shopping for special gifts at the Artisan Marketplace, picking out reading material at the Scholastic Book Fair and tasting the treats at the Fourth Grade Bake Sale and Frozen Treat table. In addition to the shopping opportunities, the Holiday Fair also offered activities for the whole family. Students had fun making snowman measuring sticks, designing holiday cards for deployed U.S. soldiers, and getting a little exercise during the hip-hop dance and hula hoop demonstrations.

The Artisan Marketplace boasted 31 vendors selling everything from jewelry and bags to candles and other handcrafted gifts. There were plenty of opportunities to shop and a few families commented that they were able to make a good dent in their holiday shopping by the end of the night.

This year we were happy to have several Ben-Hem parents and teachers as vendors in the Artisan Marketplace. Students really enjoyed seeing K3 teacher, Kim Marzullo, and FEIP tutor, Deb DeHart, as they shopped.

The event had great turnout including a large number of Ben-Hem students, their families, and members of the Natick community. With everyone's support, we raised nearly \$5,000 for the Ben-Hem PTO. In addition, the Fourth Grade Bake Sale raised over \$400 for their end-of-year activities, and the Scholastic Book Fair resulted in the donation of over 200 books to the school and about \$750 in gift certificates for teachers.

We also had some generous community donations that made this event extra special. Whole Foods-Wayland donated light snacks for the vendors to enjoy. Garden Gate Academy donated volunteers and held a hip-hop dance party for the

kids. Sherwin Williams donated the paint stirrer sticks for the snowman craft. Holiday Fair vendors also donated items to create three great raffle bags. At the end of the night, three raffle tickets were drawn and the winners were announced. Congratulations to Julie Singer, Mary Lucot, and Emily Neil!

The feedback received from parents and vendors has been very positive. That, in addition to the money raised by the event, is enough to declare the Holiday Fair a success!

"My family attended the Ben Hem Craft Fair and Book Fair tonight. What a wonderful event! We wanted to thank those who worked hard behind the scenes."

– Carla Uzzell, Ben-Hem Parent

Spirit Shirt Design Contest Winner

Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co-President

The votes are in! The winner of the 2013-2014 Spirit Shirt Design Contest is Cheryl Seigel of Ms. O'Brien's fourth grade class. Cheryl's "Bobcat Pride" design will be available to order in mid-December with delivery in early January, just in time for the first School-wide Spirit Day.. Congratulations Cheryl and thank you to all of the other students that submitted design ideas!



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FROM THE NURSES OFFICE

We wanted to provide you with some information about Coxsackie virus, which is most often seen in summer and fall. Coxsackie virus is a common childhood illness that lives in the human digestive tract and is spread by unwashed hands and surfaces that are contaminated with fecal material. Many children do not experience symptoms, but those who do may have flu-like symptoms such as fever, headaches, and/or muscle aches. In the case of hand, foot, and mouth disease (one of the Coxsackie viruses), children may also have painful red blisters in their mouths, on the soles of their feet, and/or the palms of their hands. There is no treatment for Coxsackie viruses; Tylenol and/or Motrin may be administered for fever reduction and pain reduction. Most children recover without any complications and the duration is usually 2-3 days.

We are starting to see cases of strep throat, gastrointestinal illnesses, and upper respiratory viruses at Ben-Hem. The best way to prevent these illnesses along with Coxsackie virus is to practice proper hand washing. Also, please remind your children that they should cough/sneeze into a tissue or the bend of their elbow, and if your child has a temperature above 99.6 off of fever reducing medication, he/she should stay home. All students should stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours. If your child has strep throat, he/she should stay home until he/she has been on antibiotics for a full 24 hours. These precautions can help to keep our community healthy!!

Here are a few other reminders:

- Make sure that your child has a season appropriate change of clothing; this includes students in ALL grades K-4
- Send a water bottle into school with your child each day
- Send in a physical exam for your fourth grade student if you have not already done so; Massachusetts mandates that we have current exams on file for students in grades K, 4, 7,10
- If your child should sustain an injury that requires a change in his/her activity level i.e. a sprain, fracture, concussion, etc., please notify us on the day that your child returns to school and obtain a note from your child's treating physician that provides us with activity guidelines

We wish you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving!!
Barbara Singer, MSN, RN, NCSN & Denise Twiss, MS, RN



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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Diane Horton! Diane is a Ben-Hem mom and long-time chairperson of the Scholastic Book Fair. Diane is very modest about her contributions to Ben-Hem and the PTO over the years; however, those who have worked with her have nothing but wonderful things to say. As this is Diane's last year as a Ben-Hem parent, she has been working hard to pass the Book Fair torch on to the new chairperson, Julie Balderson.

After her first year at the helm, Julie said about Diane, "Over the past 7 years she has instituted some unwritten rules that show real responsibility when selling to kids. We leave the more expensive, but less substantial novelty items, and teen and adult books boxed up when the kids come in during the day (without parents). The pencils, erasers, and bookmarks that we do sell during the day are only .50 cents and the kids add limited to two."

This is just one example of the responsible style that Diane has used to manage the Book Fair and Julie stated that she will continue this in the years to come.

Thank you Diane for all your contributions to Ben-Hem!

Q: How many students do you have at Ben-Hem this year?

A: My son Max is in 4th grade so this is my last year at Ben-Hem.

Q: How long have you lived in Natick?

A: I've lived in Natick 16 years – wow that's a long time.

Q: When did you first volunteer with the Ben-Hem PTO?

A: I first volunteered for the PTO back when my 7th grader was in Kindergarten.

Q: What was your most recent volunteer experience?

A: I most recently volunteered as co-chair of the Scholastic Book Fair. I love this event because it involves the whole school. Every child visits the Book Fair during the week. It's fun to see the kids get so excited for it. We get over 40 volunteers throughout the week so it's also a chance to meet parents

Q: What do your kids think about your volunteering?

A: Max thinks it's great when I volunteer especially the Book Fair. He visits every day after school with the hope I'll buy him books.



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TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Where Teachers Answer to the STUDENTS!

Each month, several student volunteers will interview teachers at Ben-Hem with questions of their choice. A subset of the questions will be published in this newsletter. You can view the full interviews and pictures online at: www.benhempto.org/happenings.

Question of the Month: What are you most thankful for this Thanksgiving?

“Family, friends, and my dog, Murphy!” – Ms. O’Brien

“My family, friends, and students.” – Mrs. McShane

“Family and pumpkin pie.” – Ms. Curtis

“I am most thankful for my family. I love my family so much and am thankful they are healthy and happy.” – Mrs. Dahlheimer

Ms. O’Brien (Fourth Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Cheryl Seiger (4th Grade)

Q: How long have you been teaching?

A: 27 years. That includes two years I spent teaching overseas in England and Switzerland. When I was overseas, in addition to teaching I also coached basketball, swimming, and worked as a house mother.

Q: What is your Zodiac sign?

A: Gemini (my birthday is June 17th)

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

A: Anything outdoors! I love to bike ride, paddleboard, swim, kayak, and cross-country ski. I also love to walk my dog Murphy (he’s a 10-year-old mutt).

Mrs. McShane (Second Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Elora Barros (4th Grade)

Q: How long have you been teaching at Ben Hem and why do you like Ben Hem?

A: 9 years. I like Ben Hem because it’s a great community with fabulous students and wonderful parents.

Q: What is it like being a teacher?

A: I think it is challenging to be a teacher because teachers are responsible for making sure students grow academically, socially, and learn how to become responsible citizens.

Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

A: I like to read, bake, play sports, and watch football.

Ms. Curtis (Art Teacher)

Interviewed by Kate Tearle (2nd Grade)

Q: If you had 1 billion dollars, what would you do with it?

A: Buy all the art things in the world and have a party.

Q: If you had one wish, what would it be?

A: Paint with Geogia O’Keefe

Q: What is your favorite thing about art

A: Everyone does something different

Mrs. Dahlheimer (Third Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Jessica Cohen (3rd Grade)

Q: What is your favorite board game?

A: Well with my kids, my favorite game to play is Candyland. We are playing that game a lot at home these days. When I’m with adults, I love to play Pictionary!

Q: What do you do with your kids for fun?

A: We love to explore in the woods and make fairy houses!

Q: What got you interested in butterflies?

A: I love seeing the metamorphosis that caterpillars go through. Also, butterflies come in so many different, bright colors.

KID’S CORNER

HIDDEN PICTURES: Look closely and circle the 14 hidden pictures shown at the bottom.

