

# The Berkshire Bulletin

Second Quarter  
Newsletter 2021

## Principal's Message

### *A note from Ms. Brooks*

Happy New Year! I cannot believe it's already the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter! We are half way through the school year! As we progress through the year, we are planning for the reopening of schools. Thanks to all of the families who completed the reopening survey to let us know if you'd like your child to remain virtual or to attend school using the hybrid model of in-school and virtually. Over the next few weeks as we approach March 1, we will share more information with you about the physical reopening of our school!

I sent out a survey last week to ask your children about how they feel about their teachers and our school. Our goal is to always improve in helping all students feel welcome, supported, valued, and academically successful in our school. These results will be utilized for the School Improvement Team to plan for how to assist teachers through initiatives, professional development, and student activities to unify our Berkshire students, teachers, and families.

It's Black History Month and students will be learning information about the African American historical figures. We must all learn about respect and understand one another's cultures and beliefs. This is how we grow as a school family where all cultures and families are valued.

We have two family nights coming up soon! Our STEM Action Team (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Team), has been working hard to plan a fun "**STEM Night: Escape from Berkshire Elementary School.**" This is a virtual event for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to participate on **February 9<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-7:00 p.m.** Students will have a chance to virtually explore and see classrooms all around our new building. More information is coming soon. We plan to disseminate Bridges Math Manipulative Kits for students in grades 3-5. Information regarding the pick of these materials is coming soon. Our Climate Action Team is hosting a "**Family Wellness Night**" on **February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:30-6:30 p.m.** with workshops in different areas to support parents and families in coping with all of the stressors of parenting, managing student behaviors, and living during these challenging times.



### Upcoming Events:

January 29 – Second marking period ends

February 9 – STEM Night, grades 3, 4, 5, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

February 11 – Report cards distributed

February 15 – Presidents' Day – Schools and Offices closed

February 23 – Virtual Family Wellness Night, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

March 26 – Spring Break begins at the end of the school day

April 5 – State Mandated Holiday – Schools and Offices closed

April 6 – Schools reopen

April 16 – Third marking period ends – Elementary and Middle Schools close 3 hours early for students

April 29 – Report cards distributed

April 30 – Pre-K Conference Day, No Prek-K sessions

## Principal's message continued:

BCPS is frequently communicating through phone and email messages to families. While I know it can sometimes be overwhelming with all the phone calls, it's the only way they can communicate to the entire system directly. As an update, if you want to explore your child's grade and schoolwork, you can log onto Schoology using your child's username and password. FOCUS is the new report card platform where student data will be housed. You will be receiving information on how to access FOCUS to view your child's quarter 1 and quarter 2 **report cards on February 11<sup>th</sup>**. Updated information will be shared by BCPS.

Again, for assistance, feel free to call the school at (443)809-7008. Mrs. Cook or Mrs. Thompson will assist you. You can also reach the administrators by email. Ms. Brooks at [cbrooks3@bcps.org](mailto:cbrooks3@bcps.org) or Mrs. Wrightson at [nwrightson@bcps.org](mailto:nwrightson@bcps.org). After March 1, Mrs. Wrightson will be on maternity leave. At that time, you can contact the office who will forward your questions to Mrs. Bergin, Substitute Assistant Principal. She is a retired Principal of BCPS who is coming to us to help while Mrs. Wrightson is out. Please be safe, wear your mask, socially distance and be well! We miss you all and are looking forward to seeing you soon.

Principal Brooks

## **Early Admission to Kindergarten for the 2021-2022 School Year**

The guidelines to applying for Early Admission into Kindergarten are as follows:

- Early admission requests for kindergarten for the school year 2021-2022 must be submitted to the home school principal between January 15, 2021 – May 1, 2021.
- In order to be considered for early admission, the child must turn five between 9/2/21 and 10/14/21.
- Procedures for requesting early admission to kindergarten may be obtained at the child's home school or on the BCPS website at the Office of Early Childhood page.

## **Virtual Family Wellness Night**

Do you need ways to help your child with virtual learning? Berkshire Staff is here to help! We invite you to attend an evening of virtual wellness for Berkshire Elementary parents/guardians. The event will be held on Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Join with Google Meet Code: BesKeepCalm. The evening will include:

- Coping strategies for you and your family to lose the stress of virtual learning.
- Important presentations about the BCPS Virtual Calming Corner.
- Conscious Discipline strategies and techniques.
- Virtual learning health topics with Nurse Stiltner.

## **WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THEN!**

Attendance Matters! Make sure your child is logging into their Google Meet each day!! Please call school if you are having trouble with technology.

## Math and Reading Tips



### **More Tips for Parents Helping Students Learn Math At Home**

1. When your child is struggling with a math problem, encourage her/him by looking for right mathematical thinking.
2. Math is not a race; do not time your child when she/he is working on math fluency.
3. Never share with your children the idea that you were bad at math at school or you dislike it, especially if you are a mother.
4. Encourage number sense—the ability to separate and put numbers together flexibly—by talking with your child about how you solve math problems.
5. Encourage a growth mindset, the idea that ability and smartness change as you work more and learn more.

### **February's Reading Tip for Families by Ms. Duffek, Reading Specialist**

Feel the LOVE from a good book this month! Here is a tip from Reading Partners, a national nonprofit program:

**Set a good example; be caught in the act!** Children are a product of their upbringing and mimic the behavior they see at home, repeating the actions they observe from their parents or guardians. If a child observes his or her parent/guardian reading every night, then that child will emulate the same behavior. On the contrary, if a child observes their guardian watching TV every night while they are ordered to read their books from school, then the child might start to resent reading and desire to watch TV.

### **March's Reading Tip for Families by Ms. Duffek, Reading Specialist**

Keep the good attitude marching along! Here is a tip from Reading Partners, a national nonprofit program:

**Be enthusiastic!** Positive attitudes are very important to a child's **reading development** and generate a desire to read. Showing genuine excitement for children's reading skills will encourage them to become great readers. Struggling readers may start to develop a negative attitude towards reading, but showing them that reading can be fun will get them excited about reading time. Great times to praise a child when he or she is reading include, when he or she sounds out a difficult word, self-corrects and re-reads a sentence, or asks questions as he or she is reading.

## April's Reading Tip for Families by Ms. Duffek, Reading Specialist

Hop into some great reading this month! Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Education's parent resource,

### Reading Tips for Parents:

**SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR CREATING STRONG READERS:** Without doubt, reading with children spells success for early literacy. Putting a few simple strategies into action will make a significant difference in helping children develop into good readers and writers. Through reading aloud, providing print materials, and promoting positive attitudes about reading and writing, you can have a powerful impact on children's literacy and learning.

- Invite a child to read with you every day.
- When reading a book where the print is large, point word by word as you read. This will help the child learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the word he or she says is the word he or she sees.
- Read a child's favorite book over and over again.
- Read many stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite the child to join in on these parts. Point, word by word, as he or she reads along with you.
- Discuss new words. For example, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?"
- Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.
- Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

Reading well is at the heart of all learning. Children who can't read well, can't learn. Help make a difference for a child.

## *Grade Level Highlights*

### *Pre-Kindergarten*

Pre-K is currently working on the Communities Unit and learning about community helpers and our own Berkshire Community. In math students have been busy estimating, making sets, compassing and decomposing numbers and learning all about how numbers work. We're excited to be moving onto our fourth group of letters and sounds. Our Alphabet Zoo is growing quickly. Our next group of letters are: Bb, Ii, Kk, and Nn. During language arts we have been sharing stories and looking for story elements like character setting, problems the characters have and how they solve those problems during the story.

### *Kindergarten*

Our kindergarten teachers are impressed with student attendance. We encourage all students to join our virtual learning Google Meets each day. They have demonstrated their learning and mastery of many skills.

Thank you to all families that signed up and met with us for conferences. We appreciate your dedication and commitment to your child's education.

In ELA our students are reading nonfiction text in order to retell key details. Also, we have engaged in reading fiction texts to be able to identify the characters, setting and events in the story. Remember to have your child read or be read to for 15 minutes each day. This helps to foster

### *Kindergarten continued*

language and vocabulary development and comprehension skills. We are learning to connect the letter symbol to the letter sound. This skill will help your child to read and spell words. We also have explicitly taught 20 sight words. Remember to practice these words as this will help to build fluency in your child's reading. In mathematics we have been using math tools to help us count, order numbers, represent a quantity and add to find the sum. Ask your child to skip count by 5s and 10s to 100. They can also identify teen numbers and write simple addition equations. Continue to practice counting to 100. This is our goal!

We look forward to the third quarter of kindergarten! We will be celebrating Valentine's Day, the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school and St. Patrick's Day.

Thank you again to all our families for being flexible, cooperative and understanding during virtual learning.

### *First Grade*

*Happy New Year* to all our first grade students and parents! We are excited to see our first graders and to keep growing and learning every day! We look forward to seeing the students demonstrating our school wide virtues that include *kindness and tolerance*. We will be working on applying concepts using the number line and geometry. In phonics and reading we will continue to review many essential strategies to develop our decoding

## *First Grade continued*

and comprehension skills. We encourage students to keep attending virtual class every day, participating in class, and trying your best. Attending class regularly helps students feel a part of our class community and gives them a connection to their friends and teachers. Please remember to keep encouraging your child to read nightly, learn his/her sight words, as well as practice his/her addition math facts! Thank you for continuing to support your child with virtual learning and working together as a team.

## *Second Grade*

Happy New Year! Thank you so much to all the parents who took the time to attend parent/teacher conferences to discuss their child's progress.

This month we will be working on the following:

- Math – Students will be starting unit 5 which focuses on place value to 1,000. Students will be skip counting to 1,000 by counting bundles of 100. Students will also be learning how to count money using coins and dollars. Students will be working on making multiples of 10, 100, and 1,000.
- ELA – Students will read a variety of literary and informational texts about making a difference. Students will also use text features and ask questions in order to demonstrate an understanding of key details and author's purpose. In phonics students will build, blend, and write words with long vowel sounds and silent letters. Students will also practice reading decodable texts using high frequency words. Please encourage your child to read each night.
- Social Studies – Students will explore physical features on Google Earth and identify human made features in our continent. Students will also identify the North Pole, South Pole, Equator, Continents, and Oceans with a special focus on North America.

Students should access the online platforms: First in Math and Raz-Plus Reading for additional practice. Please make sure your child is prepared for school each day by having a pencil, their workbooks, a white board and dry erase marker, and headphones. Please remind your students of our expectations in school, to attend all classes and complete all assignments.

As always thank you for your support!

## *Third Grade*

Hello families! Wow, this school year is just flying by despite this year's challenges, we are just about halfway through the school year. We want to again thank you and your children for your patience and hard work during this trying time. In math we are focusing on multiplication and division. Please make sure to continue practicing multiplication facts at home through First in Math, games, or flash cards to build their problem-solving fluency. As students progress through elementary school, they must continue to build upon their fact fluency to problem solve. Later in this unit, students will be using their multiplication and division problem solving skills to determine the area, perimeter, and length of unknown sides of a shape. In the upcoming reading unit students will be reading a variety of texts to determine cause/effect relationships, point of view, and compare-contrast. Please continue to encourage your child to read daily and ask them questions about what they read. We love seeing your children every day in class through Google Meets, please encourage them to keep their cameras on, stay engaged, and participate in the lessons. Remember to check Schoology to stay updated on your child's progress and assignment completion. Thank you for your continued support! Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns!

## *Fourth Grade*

We hope our families had a healthy, safe, and restful holiday break! In language arts students are continuing to learn about author's viewpoint, summarize a text, theme, and read different genres of text. Students continue to increase their vocabulary skills, and comprehension of leveled texts. Please encourage them to read a book of their choice for 15 minutes each night. In math students are finishing up learning how multiplication relates to division. Soon they will be learning about fractions. Please encourage them to log into schoology and work in First in Math on their multiplication facts. Students have completed a social studies and science unit for second quarter. They are learning about emotions, feelings, and the best way to communicate them in health. As always, we thank you for your continued support at home while we learn virtually.

## Fifth Grade

Happy New Year fifth grade families! It's hard to believe that we're already through half of the school year. We'd like to thank you all for your continued flexibility, perseverance, and support throughout virtual learning and the roadblocks that we've had to face along the way. Please continue to reach out to your child's teacher with any questions or concerns you may have.

In math this quarter, students finished their third unit, *Dividing Whole Numbers and Decimals*. Students used a variety of strategies, such as area model and partial quotients, to solve multi-digit division. We encourage students to continue working towards mastery of their multiplication and division facts, as this will help them with future units. Students can access Pearson/Savaas or First in Math at any time to practice these facts and any skills that were learned in class.

In advanced math, students completed their third unit, *Rational Numbers and Algebra*, focusing on the basics of algebra, positive and negative numbers, and plotting points on the coordinate grid.

We also just finished our third ELA unit, reading texts that focused on essential questions regarding learning about nature and working together as a team. Some of the major standards covered in this unit were determining theme, identifying author's main idea through text structure and text features, and writing strong paragraphs with effective organization, conclusions, and transitions. We encourage students to read independently on their Guided Reading level to continue to strengthen their literacy skills.

In content students completed a unit about positive relationships in Health, began learning about the American Revolution in Social Studies, and investigated how we get and use water in science.

## Highlights from the Special Area teachers



We can hardly believe it is second half of the school year. Special area teachers are excited to see all the growth you all have made in library, art, music, and physical education. Please remember to attend your special area class on Google Meets during your assigned time. Also, please be sure to complete assignments for each special area class in Schoology. Thank you, Mrs. Way, Ms. Robertson, Mrs. Spence and Mr. Sabiston.

I cannot believe we are already headed in the second half of our year. Instruments are finally back, and many have been handed out to students. Lesson times change weekly and are posted in the Instrumental Schoology course and on the morning announcements. If you have any questions, please email Ms. Doyle at [tdoyle2@bcps.org](mailto:tdoyle2@bcps.org).

Thank you for your support! Ms. Doyle

## Breathe Right: An Easy Way to Feel

**Better:** Want a simple way to improve the mood of you and your loved ones? Start by taking slow and deep breaths through your nose. Many students at Berkshire have learned breathing strategies that help calm them down in times of stress. Ask your child to teach you their favorite breathing technique. Practice breathing strategies together and make an agreement that any time someone in the family is beginning to feel sad, mad, stressed, or unfocused, they will take at least 5 breaths to begin to feel better. Breathing slowly and deeply through the nose has been scientifically proven to improve mood, strengthen the immune system, and increase memory and concentration. Practicing this breathing helps the brain focus and remember, which makes learning easier. It also puts the nervous system in a parasympathetic state, which makes the body function better while making you feel calmer and happier. (Hint: The more you practice breathing, the quicker you will be able to calm yourself down in times of stress.) Parents can make the practice fun by creating a game out of it and having the family remind and support each other to breathe. You can even come up with your own breathing techniques (just make sure that the breathing is slow and deep through the nose.)

- Feeling sad or mad? Take some breaths.
- Something stressing you out? Take some breaths.
- Can't focus on your work? Take some breaths.
- About to take a test or quiz? Take some breaths.
- In a good mood, but want to feel even better? Take some breaths.

The key is to work as a team and encourage everyone to support each other as your family builds these healthy habits together. Parents are constantly reacting to situations around them and taking a moment to stop and do some breaths gives them the time they need to think about how they would like to respond. These practices are not just for kids; adults need them more than ever! Remember, emotions are contagious, so the calmer the adults are in the house, the calmer the little ones will be. Once you and your loved ones are consistently practicing breathing, you will feel calmer and more in control of your emotions and you will begin to witness a positive shift take place in your home. Learning to breathe correctly can have amazing benefits on your family's mood, school and work performance, and physical health.

## Nurse's Corner:

As BCPS continues to plan for re-opening, please see the following advisories:

**Immunizations:** Immunizations **must be up to date** to attend Baltimore County Public Schools. If you have been notified that your students' immunizations are not up to date or your child is in need of a vaccine, please provide proof of vaccines or contact the School Nurse with any questions. Your child may not be able to attend in-person learning if proof of immunizations is not submitted before in-person learning begins.

If your child does not have a health care provider or you require assistance obtaining the required vaccines, your child may receive vaccines through the *Baltimore County Department of Health* by appointment only. Please call the Baltimore County Department of Health at 410-887-2705 to schedule an appointment.

**Updates to students' health conditions:** Contact the school nurse with any new or existing health conditions so we can make the proper health accommodations for your student for reopening.

**Find me on Instagram!** I have created an Instagram account to share fun healthy tips for your students and their families. Find me @BerkshireNurseSarah

Sarah Stiltner, RN --- School Nurse  
[ssiltner@bcps.org](mailto:ssiltner@bcps.org) (Best way to contact during virtual learning) (443) 809-5820 (Health Suite Number- I am notified via e-mail of all voice messages that are left)  
For Covid 19 questions: 410-887-3816

