

August 5, 2016

Welcome to the start of the 2016-2017 school year Bell-Graham Families! This has been the longest break from students in my 32 year career. I hope the summer brought wonderful opportunities for relaxation and reconnecting with friends and family. Throughout the summer our building received its annual deep clean; the floors are shiny and teachers are busy putting classrooms back together. Our enrollment numbers continue to fluctuate: we are down to two sections in first grade, Kindergarten numbers are higher and half-day students will be enrolled at Ferson Creek. Our staff has demonstrated their growth mindset by extending their knowledge and seeking new learning experiences. Each Bell-Graham staff member has been actively engaged in professional learning throughout the summer. They model the skills we view as instrumental for each student; taking risks, persevering, extending learning efforts and working collaboratively; this is how our staff has spent their summer vacation. We are ready for an exciting new year!

**Updates to staff for the 2016-2017 school year are:**

Mrs. Alexis Hanson: Instructional Support Coach  
Mrs. Leah Schnell (Special Education) Oasis classroom teacher  
Mrs. Tammy Davis (Teacher Assistant) Oasis classroom  
Mrs. Allison Ruback (Classroom Teacher) Kindergarten  
Mrs. Amy Kerber (Classroom Teacher) First grade  
Mrs. Kristin Davison (Classroom Teacher) Second grade  
Mrs. Kerrie Russo (Classroom Teacher) Third grade  
Mrs. Diane Isbrandt (School Nurse)

Our school is open daily from 8:00-3:30. Both Mrs. Marbutt and Mrs. Priola are available to answer questions and support you and your family prepare for the coming school year. Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns you have. Please continue to drop off necessary forms and pay registration fees on-line. Having all of these records up to date supports a seamless start to the school year. Ensuring all health information, especially physicals for entering Kindergartners is on file in our Nurses office is essential. Please review the information provided below to support the opening of the 2016-2017 school year:

- **Home Access Center (HAC) will be open on Wednesday August 10 at 8:00 am** for families to view their children's class placement. Information on navigating the site can be found at [www.d303.org](http://www.d303.org) through the Parent and Students link or on the Bell-Graham site at <http://bellgraham.d303.org/logging-hac>. Please contact Kris Marbutt (331-228-6451 or [Kristina.marbutt@d303.org](mailto:Kristina.marbutt@d303.org)), or Lori Priola (331-228-6459 or [lori.priola@d303.org](mailto:lori.priola@d303.org)) if you require assistance after August 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - The staff works throughout the spring and summer to create classroom lists supportive of strong learning environments. Given the many factors impacting classroom community, there are times when a change to class placement may be necessary once the school year has begun. I will work with teachers throughout the first month of school to ensure our classes are arranged to benefit all students learning and will communicate directly with parents if there is a need to make a change.
- **Bus Information:** You have received a parent link from Jim Blaney with how to access your child's transportation information on August 17. Per Mr. Blaney: *Bus route information can be viewed by going to Bus Route E-Link located on the "For Parents" menu on [www.d303.org](http://www.d303.org). Please note that for the first two weeks of the school year, we will not make adjustments to the transportation routes. Our transportation department will collect suggestions about the routes and will make adjustments where necessary after the first two weeks of classes.*
- **Supply Drop off :**
  - **Kindergarten Students and Families only:** Mrs. Dashner and Mrs. Ruback will conduct supply drop off on **August 18 from 4:00-5:00**. Please join them in their classrooms where you can assist your child in organizing supplies.
  - **First through Fifth Grade Students and Families:** Supply drop off will be held from **8:00-9:00 am on Tuesday August 23**. The PTO will also be on hand to answer questions, purchase spirit wear and gain your support for activities planned throughout the year. Student photos will be

taken during school hours on **Monday, September 12** (with additional information being sent home closer to the date). Given our often crowded parking lot, I ask that you car-pool, walk, or ride your bike if coming to drop off supplies on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

- **School Hours:** Our school hours are 8:40-3:00. This school year, we are asking that students arrive between 8:25 and 8:30. Students will remain in the main hallway or on busses until the 8:30 bell when they will head directly to their classrooms (Kindergarten students will continue to line up with their teachers in the hallway to the left of our main entry). Teachers have created opportunities for reflection, goal setting, inquiry and community building for students from 8:30-8:45 each school day. There will be no supervision for students prior to 8:30. I realize this is a change from past practice however this change aligns with District expectations for elementary schools. For the safety of all, arrange your drop-off times to coincide with the official arrival time. Only on the first day of school, **Wednesday, August 24**, will students in grades 1 – 5 line up outside on the back blacktop; classroom teachers will meet you there at 8:30. Kindergarten will line up in the main hallway with their teachers. Bus service begins on August 24 for all eligible students.
- **Spirit Days:** Every Friday this school year will be BG spirit day. Show your school pride by wearing PTO spirit wear or our school colors of royal blue/silver. Student Council may add excitement with specially planned spirit days throughout the year. Look for information on these special events in my weekly email.
- **Forgotten Items:** If your child forgets a musical instrument, a lunch, winter gear...please place the item, clearly labeled with your child's name, on the shelf marked for their grade level located in our main hallway. Students will be instructed to check the shelf at various times in the day. Calls into classrooms will not be made as they negatively impact instructional time. Thank you for your help in building independence!
- **Calendar of events:** Please visit the Bell-Graham website at <http://bellgraham.d303.org/> to gain insights into events around the building. PTO website also includes a calendar <http://bellgrahamelementary.my-pto.org/>
- **Cafeteria Information:** Aramark continues as our lunch provider. Student lunches are \$2.50. You can deposit funds and review student purchases through PushCoin. Once you've created a PushCoin account, you will be able to add funds by sending a check to school, e-check (no charge to you or District) or via credit card (fee for use). PushCoin also allows the transfer of funds between your children. Information on utilizing PushCoin can be found on the D303 website under Parent Resources/On-line Lunch Payments (<https://www.pushcoin.com/>). An additional service for 3-5 grade students is the inclusion of Smart Snacks. Please see the attached flier for more information.
- **Safety:** Having students start and end their day safely is everyone's goal. To achieve that, adherence to the drop off and pick up procedures must occur. The Transportation link on the BG website (right hand side) provides detailed information. In thinking of the busy first weeks of school, please consider the following:
  - Walk to school with your children
  - Ride bikes to school (2-5 graders) starting the first day
  - Car pool
  - Utilize the bus
  - Pull up in front of the school to drop off children each morning. Children exit and enter cars in front of the building where staff are on duty to assist.
  - If walking your child to the door, please park your car and walk with your child through the parking lot, crossing at the cross walk.
- When utilizing the parking lot at Bell Graham; area in front of the school and the bus circle (after 9:00 am), please be mindful of the comings and goings of pedestrians, bike riders and drivers. A few helpful reminders:
  - Be alert to crossing guards and staff members and follow their guidance
  - Handicapped parking is for those with valid stickers only
  - Do not block in another vehicle
  - Cell phone use is prohibited by law in school zones

Reading is a passion of mine and the summer offers a great opportunity to catch up on best sellers and professional literature. Our work throughout the 2015-2016 school year in understanding growth/fixed mindset and how grit and perseverance support student achievement, led me to Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*. Mr. Tough reviews the work of both Dr. Duckworth (grit), and Dr. Dweck (growth mindset), and provides suggestions on how parents and educators support the development of characteristics associated with growth mindset and grit. Mr. Tough labels these skills as *character* and provides the rationale for the following as instrumental to how children succeed; perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism and self-control. You can follow this link for a short interview and summary of Mr. Paul's work <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/04/160258240/children-succeed-with-character-not-test-scores>

The educators at Bell-Graham realize the opportunity each school day possesses and would like to capitalize on the start of our learning day to support the development of these skills. Coming to school excited and comfortable taking risks are necessary first steps. Our changes to the start of the school day were crafted to provide each student with a relaxed and purposeful start to learning. Teachers will welcome students to their classrooms at 8:30 each day. As a group, they will plan activities that engage, inspire and prepare students for the learning day. Engaging in independent research, goal setting, organization/planning, mindfulness/reflection or physical activity are all suggestions teachers have considered. Students will have approximately 15 minutes to engage in this work prior to the pledge at 8:45. We need your support in ensuring that students arrive to school by 8:30.

The staff and I are eager to have students back in classrooms. This has been a long summer and we are eager to hear the adventures students engaged in. Your insights, suggestions and questions are important and instrumental to making our learning community a collaborative one. I encourage you to partner with us this school year in developing the strongest school environment for each child. Our PTO is an exceptional organization! I urge you to use this group as a vehicle to support Bell-Graham. A Back to School picnic is planned for Thursday August 25 from 6-8 pm. I hope you can join us in celebrating the start to a wonderful year of learning! If there is anything I can do to support a smooth start to the school year, do not hesitate to contact me.

See you all soon!



Patti Palagi  
Principal, Bell-Graham Elementary  
[Patti.palagi@d303.org](mailto:Patti.palagi@d303.org)  
331-228-6457