



# THE BLACKBIRD BUGLER

MR. THOMAS B. REARDON, PRINCIPAL

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## GEARING UP FOR PARENT CONFERENCES!

Happy Autumn (or should I say winter, considering this brisk weather?)

As we approach mid-November, it's hard to believe that our first quarter is coming to a close. With the close of the quarter comes our first round of Parent Conferences, scheduled for November 13th, November 17th, and November 20th.

At our October PTA meeting, we used this time to begin discussing the importance of the parent conference, and making the most of this precious time. With each family scheduled for 20 minutes, it is important to ensure that this time is used to the best of one's ability. Many have asked about the "new" report card format, as a great deal of time was placed into the revision of the previous reporting system. Though new for the teachers, parents will mostly see the changes in the formatting and organization, as we will be using our student management software to input grades and comments. Also, special area report cards (which are reported in January and June ) will be located on the same report card, rather than separate sheets. If nothing else, families can look forward to a universal, easy-to-read report of their child's progress, without the difficulties of reading handwriting, and deciphering triplicate carbon-copied forms. I am so proud of our teachers and staff for investing their time and effort in creating a more user-friendly format.

At this PTA meeting, we also discussed some "tips" for a smooth, effective conference. After combing through a great deal of research and potential sources, I was at first discouraged to find that a lot of what I would recommend to you as parents would not fit our current needs. Virtually all of the research on parent confer-

ences is written from the perspective that one must first work very hard to instill parental involvement. I am proud to say that this is a vital ingredient we certainly do not lack. With a 97% attendance rate at Open Houses, I am certainly confident that we will have similar attendance at individual conferences. But, though participation is a vital ingredient, there are other ingredients that assist in creating the perfect, most beneficial parent conference for you, your child's teacher, and most importantly, your child! You can find the articles distributed at the meeting by visiting my Principal's Corner at <http://vcsdk12.org/EL/PrincipalsCorner.htm>, but I'd like to highlight some important commonalities that I've found very informative:

1. Come in to the conference with focused questions- be prepared to ask about your child's strengths, and areas in which they can improve upon.
2. Focus on the present- though last year might have been a particularly resonating year with vivid experiences (positive or negative), it is vital for the success of your child that such experiences be left in the past, as they will only prevent the present and future from being discussed.
3. It's all about you- remember, this is a conference about the success of your child, not about the success of your child compared to his/her classmates. Once again, ask questions about your child, and what can be done to further support his/her success.
4. Ask for clarification- as educators, we are constantly using lingo that is very specific to the field, and sometimes do take for granted that others might not understand. Below are some examples (with definitions) of some universal terms your teacher might reference, accidentally forgetting or assuming you

know their definitions:

**Fountas and Pinnell (F and P):** reading assessment tools that are used to assess fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness (phonics), and other measures of reading success. Such results are used to appropriately place students in guided reading books and assist them in finding books appropriate to their reading level.

**Literacy Stations:** Students are broken up into smaller groups to engage in various literacy-centered activities throughout the classroom.

**Supplemental Specials:** a 30 minute special once per cycle at the end of the day, that "supplements" their current specials. Students will attend the same supplemental special for the entire quarter, before switching.

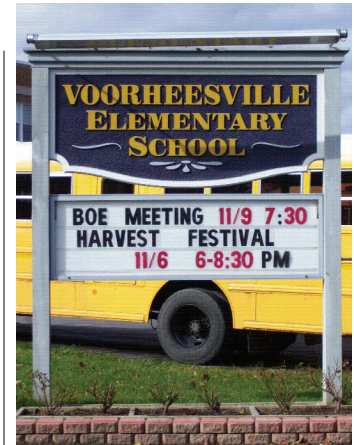
**TAD: Theatre, Arts and Dance,** this is a combination of music and PE that forms this supplemental special.

**Smartboard:** All classrooms are outfitted with a touch screen interface that allows students to interact with the computer

These are just some of the examples, but the point being to please ask your teacher for clarification should you not understand a term that has become typical at Voorheesville Elementary School.

As always, celebrate this time, as this is a chance to look at strengths, and also work on areas of growth for the remainder of the year.

Any questions at all, never hesitate to contact me at [treadon@vcsdk12.org](mailto:treadon@vcsdk12.org), or at 765-2382. We are proud to have you in our Voorheesville family, and look forward to seeing you throughout the next few weeks.



### UPCOMING DATES OF INTEREST

- Nov. 6th—Harvest Festival 6 pm
- Nov. 11th—No School—Veterans Day
- Nov. 12th—End of First Quarter
- Nov. 13th, 17th and 20th—Early Dismissal at 11:50 am Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Nov. 16—20th American Education Week
- Nov. 16 & 17th - 5th Grade NYS Social Studies Test
- Nov. 25-27th—No School Thanksgiving Break



Students participate in our first Team Building Day on October 30th.

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Please use the following directory for your convenience:

<b>Voorheesville Elementary School</b>	765-2382
Thomas B. Reardon, Principal	
<b>School Nurse:</b>	
Colleen Bracket	765-2382 Ext. 506
<b>Kid's Club Program (afterschool)</b>	765-2043
Cindy Abelseth, Director	
<b>Transportation Department:</b>	
Mike Goyer	765-2382 Ext. 508
Priscilla Clark	765-2382 Ext. 521



Mrs. Mancuso's 1st grade Halloween parade!

## SAYING GOODBYE!



Wishing Mrs. Allard well on her last run!

On Friday, October 30th, the Voorheesville Central School District said goodbye to Chris Allard, as she begins her retirement. Mrs. Allard has been a bus driver at VES for 30 years, and has also served as the first (and only to date) president of the United Employees of Voorheesville. We wish her lots of luck and happiness in her retirement. Though route 1 will live in infamy as her bus, you will see her smiling face substituting from time to time!

On Friday, Voorheesville Central School District also said goodbye to Sheila Lobel after 20 years of service to the district. We wish her well on her retirement.

Voorheesville Elementary says goodbye to Mrs. Race, whose last day will be Friday, November 6th. Mrs. Race has been an integral member of the office team, serving as the Principal's Secretary for the past year. She has accepted a position as a paralegal. We wish her the best of luck in her new position, and will greatly miss her!



## Team Building



Students spent their morning on October 30th engaging in building-wide team building activities, in celebration of their reading of the book *Have You Filled Your Bucket Today?* All activities involved team work, positive thinking, and the importance of providing positive feedback to one's peers. This theme will be echoed in future VES Spirit Assemblies!

**Attention 5th Grade Band Members and Parents** -It's that time of year - we are beginning full band rehearsals at the Elementary School. Our first rehearsal will be on Thursday, November 12th (Day 3), from 7:40am-8:30am. Rehearsal time is before school starts, so your student will need to be dropped off early or may take the early bus (Middle/High School) to school. **PLEASE do not drop off your student until 7:30am, as they will not be supervised.** If you are dropping off your student for morning rehearsal - PLEASE do NOT use the bus loop! You need to park in the main parking lot and escort your student across the bridge and see that they are safely in the building. This is to ensure that there are no accidents with the busses. The transportation department and I appreciate your cooperation in this matter to see that your children are safe. For your planning pleasure, our Winter Concert will be held on Wednesday, January 20th, 2010, at 7pm at VES, along with the chorus. Please contact Mrs. Matheke at [matheke@vcsd.org](mailto:matheke@vcsd.org) or 765-2382, x-538 with questions.

## REMINDERS

### American Education Week

November 16—20th is American Education Week. Feel free to stop in and visit your child's teacher during the specified times below.

K & 1 Monday, Nov. 16th

2 & 3 Wednesday, Nov. 18th

4 & 5 Thursday, Nov. 19th

### Hat/Scarf/Mitten Drive

The Middle School Builders Club is sponsoring a NEW hat/ scarf/ mitten drive during the month of November. There will be a collection box available near the Main Office for donations.

### Girl Scouts Soup Drive

Please help the Girl Scouts fill the shelves at the New Scotland Area Food Pantry. This time of year there is an increased demand on food pantries so 3rd Grade Brownie Troop 1266 will be collecting canned soup and personal care items during the month of November. Collection boxes will be available at the Library, Elementary School and Hannaford in Voorheesville. Won't you share a little to help a lot?

Please help Girl Scout Troop 1161 collect for a family in need!

A family from Burma (Myanmar), a country in southeast Asia, had been living in a refugee camp for several years due to a civil war in their country. They moved to an apartment in Albany's South End in July. They are being helped by the US Committee for Immigrants and Refugees, and Troop 1161 is asking the Voorheesville community for help in collecting some winter necessities (outerwear and blankets), children's clothes, household items, and school supplies for the family.

The family has 4 children and is expecting another child soon. They would truly appreciate girls clothes in sizes 10, 8, and 2 and size 5 boys clothes. Since the mother is expecting a baby soon, they would also be very grateful for diapers, a car seat, a port-a-crib, and newborn clothes.

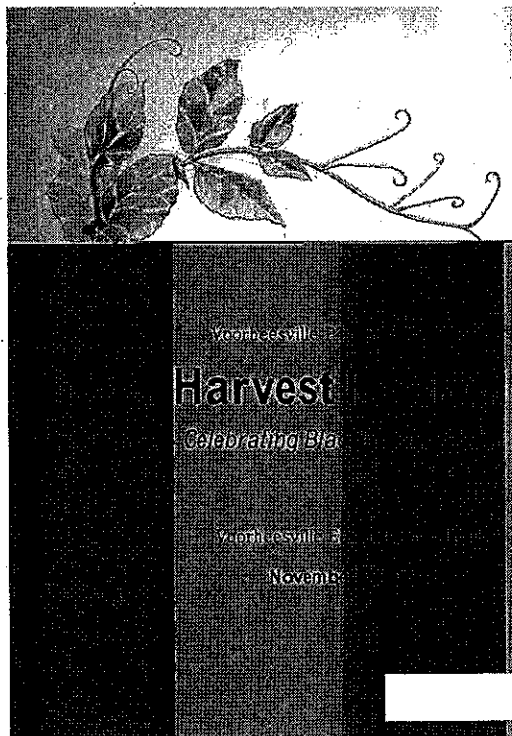
We will be collecting for the family from November 16-20th and will have a container outside the Main Office for your donations. Please make sure all donations are clean and in good condition. If you'd like to arrange for pick-up of any donations, please call Deirdre Keating at 765-2357.

If you'd like to learn more about helping refugee and immigrant families in need, please visit: [www.uscri.org](http://www.uscri.org). Donations collected and not needed by this family will go to help other refugee and immigrant families in need.

If you want to know why we are donating to this family, it is because it is almost Thanksgiving, because winter is coming, and we felt like we should help a family in need.

Thank you from Troop 1161:

Olivia Rowland, Maya Herr, Abby Goldfarb, Lauren Mackey, Allison Farney, Nicole Hooker, Madeline McDonnell, Sarah Alden, and Julia Voss.



Blackbird Paradise Peas by Jean Mackay, June 2009

## Program

Food Sampling	6 - 7:30 PM <i>small gymnasium</i>
Dessert	6 - 7:30 PM <i>small gymnasium</i>
Physical Activities Centers	6 - 7 PM <i>large gymnasium</i>
Nutritional Displays	6 - 7:30 PM <i>small gymnasium</i>
Healthy Lifestyle Posters	6 - 8:30 PM <i>all areas</i>
Craft Centers	6:15 - 8:30 PM <i>lower cafeteria</i>
Homespun Dancing	7 - 8:30 PM <i>large gymnasium</i>
Grand Prize Drawing	8:30 PM <i>large gymnasium</i>



# Everyday math

Add a little math to daily activities. You'll build your youngster's number skills and show her that counting and arithmetic are part of everyday life.

## Numbers

Hunt for numbers during outings so your child can see all the ways they're used. Work as a team to find every number from 1 to 100, and check them off on a tally sheet as you go. In the grocery store, look on aisle signs and price stickers. At a football game, read numbers on players' jerseys and the scoreboard. Can your family find all 100 in a day?



## Counters

Serve raisins for a snack. Give each family member a handful, and ask everyone to estimate and then count the number they have. Let your youngster add them all up—how many raisins does your family have altogether?

## Facts

Show your child real reasons to learn multiplication by using facts throughout the day. If you have one bathroom, 4 people in your family need to shower, and each gets 10 minutes, you'll need 40 minutes for everyone to have a turn ( $4 \times 10 = 40$  minutes). If you play mini golf and it costs \$5 per person, that's \$20 ( $4 \times \$5 = \$20$ ). ♥

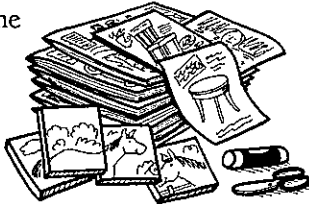
## ACTIVITY CORNER



## Magazine learning

Turn old magazines into new learning tools. Here are two ideas:

1. Your youngster can practice grouping objects by choosing a theme and cutting out related photos from magazines. If the category is furniture, for example, he would group them into couches, tables, and beds. Then, have him make smaller groups (say, according to room or color).



2. A two-sided jigsaw puzzle will stretch your child's logical thinking. Have him tear out two full-page pictures or ads from a magazine. Then, cut off the front panel from a cereal box. Let him glue one picture on each side of the panel and cut the panel into pieces (12 for younger children, 24 for older ones). To put his puzzle together, he will first need to figure out which picture each piece goes with. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Be in charge

While searching for a job recently, I saw many positions that required strong leadership skills. Knowing what an important quality this is for the workplace, I started thinking about ways I could let my daughter practice being a leader.

I decided to put Ella in charge of our family garage sale. After telling her what tasks needed to be done, I asked her to give one to each person. I explained that good leaders think about people's strengths when they divide up responsibilities.

Ella asked me to write the garage sale ad, since I had put advertisements in the newspaper before. Her dad is a store manager, so she asked him to price the items. And she decided to make posters to hang in our neighborhood because she loves art.

Our sale was very successful. We sold many things we didn't need anymore—and our daughter got hands-on experience being a leader. ♥



## Q & A Conferences count

**Q:** I volunteer weekly in my son Micah's classroom, so I see how he's doing in school. Do I still need to go to the parent-teacher conference?

**A:** By helping out at school, you're showing your son that you care about his education. Attending a conference is a different—and important—way to connect with the teacher.

At your conference, you will get one-on-one time with the teacher to talk just about

Micah—something that won't happen while you're reading with students or making copies. She may show you examples of his work and provide suggestions for ways you can help him at home, such as making vocabulary flash cards or listening to him read.

And you can give her information that may help her teach your son. For example, you might mention his hobbies or discuss problems he had with a project. ♥



### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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