

THE BLACKBIRD BUGLER

MR. THOMAS B. REARDON, PRINCIPAL

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A CORNUCOPIA OF EVENTS



Happy Autumn (or should I say winter, considering this 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 12th, November 16th, and November 19th.

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.

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 conferences 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 95% 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 tips that assist in creating the perfect, most beneficial parent conference for you, your child's teacher, and most importantly, your child! 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)/ DIBELS: 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 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 screen

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 treardon@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.



Children enjoying one of the many activities during our Spirit Day!

UPCOMING DATES OF INTEREST

- **Nov. 5th - End of First Quarter**
- **Nov. 10th - No School - Superintendent's Conference Day**
- **Nov. 11th - No School - Veteran's Day**
- **Nov. 12th, 16th and 19th—Early Dismissal at 11:50 am Parent/Teacher Conferences (PM Kindergarten in session)**
- **Nov. 15 - 19th American Education Week**
- **Nov. 24-26th - No School Thanksgiving Break**

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Please use the following directory for your convenience:

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

Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.

You don't have to have a college degree to serve.

You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.

You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

This is a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. It is a reminder that everyone is important and can do something good for our community. It doesn't matter what age you are or how much money you have - we can all make a difference!!

We are looking to increase opportunities for our students to volunteer in our community. If you have any ideas for appropriate elementary opportunities, please contact Thomas Reardon at 765-2382, or via email at Treardon@vcsdk12.org.

HEALTH/SAFETY REMINDERS

Please help us prevent parking lot back-ups by dropping off students without getting out of your vehicle. Please have your child/children exit the right side of your vehicle. If you need to assist your child further, we do ask that you park your car so that others can continue to drop off and exit. Thank you for your cooperation!



Voorheesville Middle School Drama Club Presents:

- *"The Three Musketeers,"*
- *All Swash and No Buckle**

Three performances at the Voorheesville H.S. Performing Arts Center on:

- *Friday, November 19th @ 7:30 pm
- *Saturday, November 20th @ 7:30 pm
- *Sunday, November 21st @ 2 pm
- *Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students/children
- *Pre-show tickets available until Nov 12th by contacting Christy Rivenburg at the H.S.



Parents - please remember to call your child in sick if they are going to be absent. If we do not receive a phone call we will need to call you to verify their absence. Also if your child is coming in late you need to walk them in and sign them in late.

Remember to sign-up for SNN!

With the cold weather coming we all know bad weather can't be far behind. Please take the time to sign-up for SNN (School News Notifier). You will receive emails about early dismissals or closings due to inclement weather. This will allow immediate email updates about events and procedures at V.E.S. Please visit <http://snn.neric.org/vcsd/> for further information. You will see the icon on the home page of the school district website.



What's New in our Cafeterias?

With significant local and national attention upon our childhood obesity and proper nutrition, the Voorheesville Central School District lunch program is pleased to offer numerous child-friendly, healthy food options at both the elementary and secondary levels.

A recently-convened Ad Hoc School Foods Committee (with parent representation from the three buildings) is in the process of discussing our lunch program. Through such conversations, it was discovered that there were not only a few widespread misconceptions, as well as other areas we have improved in which families were unaware.

Most recently, the elementary school has commenced offering whole wheat bagels, rather than only offering the white bread bagel option. *Yo Kids* Organic Yogurt also serves as the compliment to the bagel meal, replacing the *Trix* yogurt lunch option. It is also important to note that all meals are served with the child's choice of vegetable and whole fresh fruit. Students also have the daily option of a fresh Soup of the Day (ranging from Thanksgiving Feast to Homestyle Chicken Noodle).

Throughout the committee discussions, the availability of fresh fruit and vegetable salads has frequently surfaced, especially in reference to elementary school offerings. It is important to note that, each day, students have the option of purchasing a fresh salad (made that morning) from the display case as they first enter the lunch line. Students have the option of purchasing buffalo and grilled chicken salads, as well as chef, garden, and fruit salads each day. If students would prefer to purchase a turkey or ham sandwich, these options are also available in the display case. Whether it's the sandwich or grilled cheese lunch items, the district uses all whole wheat breads for its meals.

Over the course of the next few weeks, your child can expect to see the use of whole wheat pasta and brown rice, in place of our current starch offerings. This change, coupled with the aforementioned elements of our current program, illustrate that district's commitment to offering our children a healthy, balanced lunch that not only falls within the National School Lunch Program guidelines, but also a meal that is cost-reasonable for all families within our district.

In addition to our lunch program improvements and additions, a few misconceptions have surfaced regarding our ancillary snack offerings. Some answers to those questions are as follows:

When do students purchase snacks?

At the elementary school, snacks are only offered after all lunches have been served, and some time has passed to allow for students to eat their regular lunch. If ample time does not exist for students to purchase a snack and eat their lunch, snack sales are not offered. At the middle school level, snacks can be purchased 20 minutes into each lunch period.

Does Voorheesville use trans fats in their cooking of fried foods?

Absolutely not! In fact, the use of trans fats in Albany County is prohibited. It is also important to note that all foods prepared at Voorheesville are baked using convection ovens.

Tell us more about the slushy machines at both buildings. The color is quite pronounced, and since it's a slushy, it clearly contains a great deal of sugar and artificial ingredients for color and taste.

The slushy machines use a mixture that is 100% pure fruit juice, and is made entirely from pears. The coloring, though dark, comes exclusively from a mixture of raspberry and blueberries. It is important to note that the mixture contains no artificial ingredients. In fact, a serving of slushy contains less sugar than one apple!

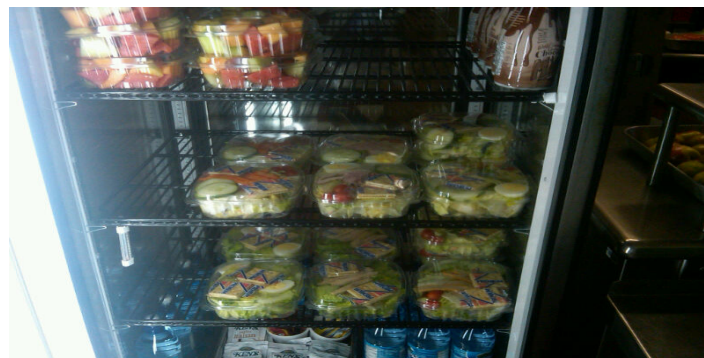
I noticed we have stopped offering the sale of strawberry milk. What about chocolate milk?

The district continues to look at the sale of chocolate milk, in that similar to strawberry milk, contains a significant amount of sugar. One half-pint of chocolate milk contains 25 grams of sugar (more than one can of soda)! This was the logic used in pulling the sale of strawberry milk. The district, in conjunction with the Ad-Hoc School Food Committee, will continue to explore the availability of chocolate milk to our students. Currently, the district does not sell whole milk, but does offer 2 %, 1%, and skim as other options.

Can I find out what my child is purchasing at school?

Absolutely! Our Nutrikids software allows families to view purchases, place money on accounts, and even place “blocks” on certain items (snacks, or other items you would prefer your child not purchase). For more information, please contact Christy Rivenburg at 765-3313 x109, visit

<http://www.vcsdk12.org/foodservice/NutriKids/MyNutriKids.htm> for more information.



The Salad Display Case at the Elementary School, Containing a Variety of Daily Items for Student Purchase

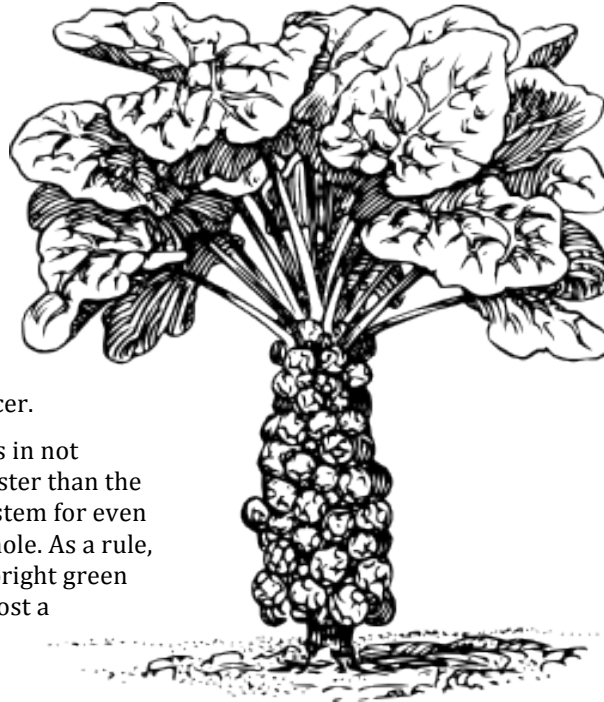
What's still growing in Blackbird Paradise?

Brussels Sprouts!

Brussels sprouts, is a hardy, slow-growing, long-season vegetable belonging to the cabbage family. Sprouts improve in quality and grow best during cool or even lightly frosty weather.

As a member of the cabbage family Brussels sprouts are a cruciferous vegetable. Current research suggests vegetables in this group offer protection against some forms of cancer.

The key to cooking Brussels sprouts is in not overcooking them. The leaves cook faster than the core, so cut an X in the bottom of the stem for even cooking when cooking the sprouts whole. As a rule, when Brussels sprouts have lost the bright green color, they are overcooked and have lost a considerable amount of nutritional value as well.



Depending on size, cooking time should not exceed 7 to 10 minutes whether you are steaming, braising or boiling. Large sprouts can be cut in half or quartered with reduced cooking time of 5 to 7 minutes.

If plain Brussels sprouts are not appealing, try them with a little Parmesan cheese, simple herbs or spices, a small amount of salad dressing, or sautéed onions and garlic.



Blackbird Paradise
villiegarden@gmail.com