

BOWEN ELEMENTARY PARENT NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2011

Stephen Tyra, Principal

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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE: HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE THE DECEMBER HOLIDAYS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL?

Now that Thanksgiving has come and gone, our attention turns to the December holidays with all the bright lights, shopping, and celebration! But wait a minute, can you celebrate Christmas in a public school? This is a question I get every year and it is always a hot topic of television news shows and talk radio. People seem to get all upset that somehow public schools will either misrepresent or leave out their particular holiday whether it be Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa. Don't panic! The answer to the question about how the holidays can be dealt with in a public school is really very simple. As a principal who has spent a considerable amount of time reading case law and arguments dealing with this topic, I have come to the conclusion that an all or nothing approach is most appropriate. This means that a school is either all inclusive and represents properly all the groups that celebrate the December holidays or it is a school that completely avoids the situation and sticks to symbols of the winter season such as snowflakes and mittens. It is my belief that since Bowen Elementary is in the business to educate that we must discuss all the holiday celebrations and display the symbols from each of them so that our students are aware that people around the world celebrate for different reasons and in different ways. At this school, we will teach our students about the origins of Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. We will let them hear the songs associated with each and make sure to bring up the religious significance of each. We will present the facts as facts. In this way we are not promoting religion, rather we are putting it in its place in history and in the development of world culture. Never is it appropriate, or in my opinion legal, for a public school teacher to proselytize about religion. So, will you see Santa Claus, a menorah and a Kwanzaa wreath displayed at Bowen? Yes. Will you hear "Silent Night" sung at our holiday musical? Yes. Will you see a comprehensive instructional program which teaches our students about the historical and cultural significance of all the December holidays? Again, yes. As it is not appropriate for public school teachers to proselytize about religion to the students, the same is true for parents or other guests to our school. Public school is a place for learning. It is not a place to recruit or gather converts for your particular religion. If you have any questions about this matter feel to contact me. Happy holidays!

BOWEN EXTENDS CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION TO THE HOME WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY

The staff of Bowen Elementary understands how much students love to play video games. We also are keenly aware of how limited the time is during the regular school day to cover all that we need to with our students. In addition, we know that parents are also pressed for time in the evenings when the kids get home from school. So, we have come up with a plan to expand the time our students are engaged in learning by capitalizing on their love for playing games on the computer. We are purchasing several new programs which can be used both at school and at home to reinforce academic skills. For example, launching this month will be a new math program called Timez Attack. Initially open to all students in grades three, four, and five, this program will provide students an entertaining way to practice their basic facts. Students will be shown how to use the program at school and then given directions on how to install the program at home and use it free of charge. The program tracks student progress and sends a report directly to the teacher to keep them informed of individual progress. In the Spring, Timez Attack will be open to all students K-5. We will be launching programs for students to use at home throughout the year to expand the instructional time beyond the walls and schedule of school. The old flash cards just don't cut it for the kids today. They want to be able to duel math monsters and become the Jedi Knight of multiplication and division. Since we know that kids want to be on the computer anyway, it seems logical to us to give them something worthwhile to play. We hope that these new programs give you an easy way to help your child achieve. Stay tuned for more details!

BOWEN WELCOMES NEW FIFTH GRADE TEACHER!

Bowen Elementary proudly announces the addition of Mrs. Melissa Thompson to our teaching staff. She will replace fifth grade teacher Jessica Feltes who has decided to extend her child rearing leave to care for her son who was born in September. Mrs. Thompson is an experienced JCPS intermediate teacher who taught previously at Fern Creek Elementary and Okolona Elementary. She is returning from her own child rearing leave for her two children. Mrs. Thompson comes to us with rave reviews from her previous schools! She has already met her new class and will have her first official day on Tuesday, January 3. She is holding a Meet and Greet for the parents of her students on Thursday, January 12 at 6:30 p.m. in her classroom. Welcome Mrs. Thompson! We are very glad to have you on board!

BOWEN SAYS GOODBYE TO A FAVORITE TEACHER

The Bowen Elementary family extends best wishes to Mrs. Juanita Shelton on the announcement of her retirement at the end of December. Mrs. Shelton has educated young minds for over 20 years at our school! She has decided it is time for her to expand her role as grandmother and to be home with her husband. Mrs. Shelton has taught a generation of kids how to read, write and do math. She has met them daily with a big smile and a kind heart and has made a huge impact in the lives of so many in our community. Congratulations, Mrs. Shelton! You will be missed. (Hopefully, we can convince you to sign up for our substitute teacher list!) Final interviews for the new teacher are underway. We have several amazing candidates and will make a final decision soon.

BOWEN HOLIDAY MUSICAL PROGRAM DECEMBER 15

The annual Bowen Holiday Musical Program will be held on Thursday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium. This year's show features all of our fourth grade classes performing holiday tunes along with a special performance by the students from Bowen's orchestra. Everyone is invited for a night of holiday cheer!

CLASS HOLIDAY PARTIES DECEMBER 16

Room parents and teachers have been hard at work planning for the upcoming December holidays class parties. This year's parties will be held on Friday, December 16. Your child's teacher will let you know the official start time of their class's activities. Parents are welcome to participate! We will be running our holiday shuttle from A.B. Sawyer Park to keep you from having to park illegally in the neighborhood once the back lot fills. Look for shuttle information to be sent home the week of the parties.

WINTER BREAK DECEMBER 19-JANUARY 2

Schools will be closed from Monday, December 19, 2011 through Monday, January 2, 2012. Classes resume on Tuesday, January 3! I wish you and your family a happy holiday season!

LYNDON ELKS CLUB DONATES STUDENT DICTIONARIES

The Lyndon Elks Club has purchased class sets of new dictionaries for our third grade classes! This is the sixth year that they have purchased dictionaries for our students. Thank you Lyndon Elks! You are a great community partner!

MIDDLE SCHOOL APPLICATION DEADLINE JANUARY 6, 2012

The deadline for submitting applications for middle school option and magnet programs is January 6, 2012. If you need help completing these forms do not hesitate to contact me or our school counselors.

BOWEN BASKETBALL TEAM BEGINS THE SEASON

The Bowen basketball team will open the new season with a game against Chenoweth Elementary on Friday, Dec. 9 at 6 p.m. at Westport Middle. The team, coached by Terry Ballard, has had a busy preseason with twice weekly practices. The team looks to be a winner this year! Bowen basketball games are a community event with hundreds of fans cheering on our team each week. Students from all grades and their families join the Bowen cheerleaders in rooting on the team! Admission is \$2 per adult and \$1 for students. See you at the game! The schedule for the 2011-12 season is:

Friday, December, 9, 6 p.m. Bowen vs. Chenoweth
Tuesday, December, 13, 6 p.m. Bowen vs. Chancey
Friday, January, 6, 7 p.m. Bowen vs. Dunn
Friday, January, 13, 8 p.m. Bowen vs. Norton
Friday, January, 20, 7 p.m. Bowen vs. St. Matthews
Friday, February 3, 8 p.m. Bowen vs. Lowe
Tuesday, February 7, 7 p.m. Bowen vs. Zachary Taylor
Friday, February 17 Tournament
Tuesday, February 21 Tournament
Friday, February 24 Championship and Cheer Showcase

PTA SKATING PARTY JANUARY 30

The next Bowen PTA skating party will be held on Monday, January 30 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Champs! Admission is \$3 per skater. Rental skates are available for \$1. As always, all skaters must be accompanied by a parent who remains at the rink throughout the event. This is a safety precaution in case someone falls while skating.

REPORT CARDS TO BE DISTRIBUTED JANUARY 18

Report cards will be distributed to all Bowen students on Friday, January 18. Please review the grades with your children and encourage them to always do their best. Parent-teacher conferences are always available and can be scheduled by calling the school office at 485-8213.

ADVANCE PROGRAM SCORES DISTRIBUTED IN JANUARY

The scores from the Advance Program test taken in October will be returned to us at the end of January. We will notify you of your child's results as soon as we receive them. Bowen is proud to be the home of one of the district's highest performing Advance Programs!

BOWEN LAUNCHES NEW DADS CLUB

Are you a Bowen Dad looking for a way to be more involved in your child's school life? The new Bowen Dads Club may be just what you are looking for. Founded by a group of dads looking for ways to support our students and our school, the Bowen Dads Club has officially launched and is recruiting members. Interested? Contact Mr. Tyra at: Stephen.Tyra@jefferson.kyschools.us

NEWS FROM THE SCOUTS

Last May, Girls Scouts (and former Bowen students) Katy C., McKenzie B., and Sydney W. from troop 1275 completed the first step of the prestigious Silver Award by beautifying the atrium of Bowen's new library with potted plants. After conducting research with plant specialist at Nanz and Kraft florist, the girls found two species of plants that would both beautify and help the air quality at our school. The girls enlisted students from our kindergarten classes to decorate the pots using their thumbprints. Later, the thumbprints were turned into Bowen Bee mascots. Thank you Katy, McKenzie and Sydney for continuing to contribute to the Bowen school community! Your work is appreciated.