SPARKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OUR MISSION

Sparks Elementary School will provide a high quality education in a safe, secure, and positive learning environment that is fully inclusive and prepares students to be critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, collaborative learners, and caring citizens for a globally competitive environment.

Ken Dunaway
Principal

Meredith Alvarez
Assistant Principal

February 13, 2020

Happy February! With the lack of snow days, we are working hard at Sparks Elementary. High quality instruction is continuing daily. In order to help your child at home it is important to read with them every day. Make sure to discuss and ask questions about what is being read. When children see adults reading, they start to develop a love for reading.

A special thanks to the many parents who helped organize the Father Daughter Dance. It was a huge success and fun was had by all who attended. Last week, Officer Frank, school resource officer, discussed cyberbullying with our fourth and fifth graders. With the help of the student council, we have collected 514 cans of food so far and are still counting. We currently have several clubs running before and after school. From Yoga to newspaper club we have it all. Our Sparks sharks are doing amazing things.

Remember to take the BCPS stakeholder survey at https://survey.k12insight.com/survey.aspx?k=ROsTUYQXsXYsPsP&lang=0&data=. The survey is available until March 1st.

Also, remember that school is in session on Monday, February 17.

Mrs. Alvarez
IMPORTANT DATES
Thursday, February 13       PTA Meeting – Library – 6:30
Friday, February 14        Valentines’ Day
Friday, March 6            Movie Night – 6:30
Thursday, March 12         PTA Meeting – Library – 6:30
Wednesday, April 1         Kindergarten Round-up
Monday, April 6-13         Schools Closed – Spring Break
Tuesday, April 14          Schools Reopens
Friday, April 17           Spring Pictures
Tuesday, April 28          Schools Closed – Election Day

GENERAL INFORMATION

KINDERGARTEN ROUNDUP

Sparks will be holding kindergarten registration for the 2020-2021 school year on Wednesday, April 1, 2020. Children who turn five years of age by September 1, 2012, are eligible to begin kindergarten in the fall. If you have a child who will be entering kindergarten, please complete the attached form and return it to the office as soon as possible. Also, if you have neighbors with young children, please encourage them to contact the school office so that we can get them on our registration list.

MISA - Maryland Integrated Science Assessment

This year students in grade 5 will be taking MISA- *Maryland Integrated Science Assessment*. The test will be given March 25th and March 26th. Please do your best to have your child at school on time. If a student comes to school after the test has started, they may not join the test session that is already in progress and instead must wait in the office until testing is finished. If a student misses a day of testing, they will be able to make up the test at a later time. Below are some ways that you can help your child do their best on the test.

- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Get a good night’s sleep
- Talk to your child about staying positive and doing his or her best
STUDENT COUNCIL

The Sparks Elementary Student Council would like to thank the Sparks families and staff for your generosity! Through the Giving Tree, we were able to donate 379 items to the BCPS Education Foundation “Share the Warmth” drive. This means that BCPS teachers, guidance counselors, and social workers can get items for their students in need at the Education Foundation Exchange Tree. Thank you so much for being so generous in supporting children during this winter season!

BCPS STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Every year, we ask you to take the BCPS Stakeholder Survey. Last year, BCPS used your responses to guide school improvement, staff training, and how staff work together.

Once again, your voice is needed. The survey only takes about five minutes or less, is anonymous, and is available in 16 languages for students, parents, and community members. If you are also a BCPS staff member, or if you have children in more than one school, you are encouraged to take the survey more than once to reflect these different experiences.

The survey will be available online at www.bcps.org from January 27, 2020, through March 1, 2020, for Team BCPS stakeholders: students in Grades 3-12, parents/caregivers, community members, and all staff. It takes five minutes or less to complete and is anonymous. https://survey.k12insight.com/r/SS2020
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Students who were “Caught” using their Virtues for January!

**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL…WE NEED YOUR COOPERATION!**

With over 520 students attending Sparks this year, arrival and dismissal can be quite a challenge. Our goal is to get every student to and from school safely. Having your child ride the bus each day helps eliminate the long lines at the parent loop!!

For those using the parent loop, thank you for following our safety rules. Please continue to:

- Drop off before 9 a.m. (doors lock at 9 a.m.) Students should be in their seats at 9 a.m.
- Pick up starts at 3:30 p.m. (doors lock at 3:45)
- Refrain from talking on your cell phone while driving in the loop. We need your full attention on the children and the road!
- Please **do not** pull out around other cars unless directed to do so by the staff member in charge.
- Please be patient!

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance as we strive to get our students to and from school safely and calmly each and every day!
**INTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

4th grade students in Exploratory Music are about halfway through our Brass Unit. They are learning about the history and evolution of the family as well as the Brass Family scientific characteristics. They have learned how to make a sound on the Trumpet and will be working on improving their playing skills each time students come to class this month!

5th grade students in Band and Orchestra have been working so hard on improving their playing skills! They are very excited about earning their achievement monsters each time they have mastered new skills. Both Band and Orchestra ensembles have begun learning more complicated, longer pieces of music. They are refining their reading and playing skills, as well as their independence in performing as individuals and in a group.

March is Music in Our Schools month. It has been a tradition in March to invite interested 5th graders to perform for the school in the front lobby during arrival and on the morning announcements. This is a student led activity. They choose their groups, pick their music, choose which location they want to perform in, and are responsible for finding opportunities to practice together. Students who wish to perform in the lobby need to report to school by 8:40 so they can have their instruments and music ready and set up when the doors open at 8:45. Students who choose to perform on the announcements can arrive to school at their normal time but will need to report to the library before 9:00.

Mark your calendars – Our 5th Grade Spring Concert will take place on Monday, May 18th at Sparks Elementary. More details will be sent as we get closer.

**ART MATTERS**

The past few months in the art room we have been having a lot of fun. During the busy months of December and January our Kindergarten made stuffed gingerbread men and Gingerbread houses. We also sponge painted snowmen and drew ourselves building that snowman. We also used cool colors to paint spirals and followed written directions to draw either a penguin or snowman. We then colored it with chalk and cut and glued it to our spiral painting.

Our 1st graders made popsicle stick snowflakes and cut paper snowflakes. For our next project we learned about printmaking techniques. We used cardboard and our fingerprints to make a snowflake background. We then used Styrofoam and patterns to create marker prints. We also drew patterns on paper. We will assemble them all to make our winter portrait.

In 2nd grade we read directions to make a snowman out of material. We continued the snowman theme by creating snowmen out of clay. Next we created Jen Aranyi inspired winter landscapes. Jen Aranyi is a contemporary Maryland artist! We learned about background, middle ground,
and foreground to draw the landscape. Then we learned about warm and cool colors to paint the sky with watercolor.

In 3rd grade we made my favorite project, Vincent van Gogh inspired three-dimensional landscapes. We learned all about Vincent van Gogh and his artwork. We then used oil pastels to draw in the style of van Gogh’s brushstrokes. We created a background, the sky with the very recognizable swirl patterns. Then we created a middle ground and foreground. When we assembled them they became three-dimensional. We are now working on radial symmetrical snowflakes made from cut paper.

Our 4th graders completed our autobiographical pictures by drawing our face in proportion, coloring it realistically, and mounting it on our backgrounds. We also learned about the artist Georges Seurat and pointillism.

Our 5th graders created three-dimensional snowflakes. We also used value and form to draw snowmen inspired by the book Snowmen at Night. We also made stained glass windows of a symbol of winter using tissue paper. We learned about stained glass, symbols, silhouettes, and how to use an x-acto knife safely.

It is not too early to start thinking about the summer. BCPS has a great visual arts summer camp open to students entering 3rd grade and up. The BCPS Summer Visual Arts Enrichment Camp is officially open for submissions! Dates are July 6-17 at Perry Hall High School for BCPS students going into grades 3 – 12! Attached is a brochure as well as a print application.

Are you looking for some way to express your creativity? I need some volunteers to help with displaying artwork in the hallways at school. Please email me if you are interested at schaney2@bcps.org.

- Woohoo! Over 585 yards of Christmas lights stayed out of landfills because of our efforts! Way to be green, Sparks Sharks!
- Does litter bug you? Join our campaign and help Sparks Elementary make a difference by participating in the BCPS Clean Green Challenge. You and your group can make a huge difference! Cleaning up is easy and quick – and it really adds up. Just grab some trash bags and take 15 minutes to pick up litter in an untidy area near you—a park, a schoolyard, a vacant lot, a stream, anywhere that needs it. When you have completed your pickup, come back and let us know how much you collected by filling out our form at https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/environment/cleangreen/cleangreen15.html. Snap a photo during your clean up and send it to Mrs. Keil at kkeil@bcps.org. Photos will be displayed in the lobby! Thanks for doing your part.
We need you! Sparks Elementary Green School Coordinators are planning a fun filled environmental day for our Sharks on May 15th. We need presenters and parent volunteers to make this day possible! If you are interested in presenting something about sustainability and/or an educational activity to our students, please reach out to Mrs. Keil at kkeil@bcps.org.

**IS YOUR CHILD MISSING SOMETHING?**

This is currently our Lost and Found
IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ – WINTER WEATHER CLOSINGS AND DELAYS
(We still have the rest of February and March, stay informed)

Information about school operations is announced publicly as soon as possible on local radio and television stations and other media including INTERNET.

- BCPS Now for Android and iOS
- BCPS Web Home Page links to page displaying emergency announcements
- BCPS TV, Comcast Cable Channel 73 & Verizon Fios Channel 34
- BCPS Telephone Information 443-809-5555
- Local radio and television stations
- Schools-out.com

What is the Hereford Zone?
The Hereford Zone is in the northern part of the county. SPARKS ELEMENTARY IS IN THE HEREFORD ZONE.

Where can I find information about BCPS school closings or delays?
There are several places to find out information:

- BCPS school status information line: 443-809-5555
- TV/Radio: local radio and television stations, including The Education Channel, Comcast Cable Channel 73.
- BCPS Home page

Please do not call schools or media outlets for this information.

STAY INFORMED

http://www.bcps.org/calendars/wallcalendar.pdf
SPARKS ELEMENTARY’S WEBSITE - https://sparkses.bcps.org
SPARKS ELEMENTARY INSTAGRAM - @SparksES_BCPS
SPARKS PTA WEBSITE - https://www.sparkspta.com
SPARKS PTA FACEBOOK PAGE - https://www.facebook.com/sparkspta