

February 2011 PTA newsletter

PrincipalsCorner
Sarah Sirgo

As many of you know, I read the book *NurtureShock* last year and used many of the articles as fodder for my monthly articles. I continue to read articles by one of the authors Po Bronson, not because I always agree with what he says, but because he causes me to pause and think. As we approach the annual season of standardized assessments, I thought this article below was one worth sharing with you.

This is Your Brain on a Test: December 15, 2009

Carol Dweck and Jennifer Mangels had Columbia undergraduates wear a Quick-Cap or device that measures electrical activity on the scalp while taking a computerized trivia test. The students worked through over 200 questions, covering topics from geography, religion, world and US history, math and science, literature, and art history. These questions were chosen because they'd ring a bell of familiarity – students felt like they *should* know the answer, but often weren't quite able to recall it. Example: In what country is Kathmandu? The computer adjusted the level of difficulty just slightly, so that most students felt a little frustrated, getting about 60% of the answers wrong. If they were below that level, the computer might feed them an easier question – “Who was the Confederate General at the Battle of Gettysburg?” – but if they were above the level, they got “Who was the Union General at the Battle of Gettysburg?”

Students typed in their answer. A couple seconds later, they saw a green light or a red light to indicate if they were accurate. A few seconds after that, they were shown the correct answer (i.e., General Robert E Lee, or General Meade, respectively). This gave them a chance to learn from their mistakes.

But whether they wanted to learn was an entirely different question.

That was the purpose of the scalp cap. It measured activity in the brain's attention systems – just how vigilantly were the students paying attention when they found out if their answer was correct or not? And were the students bothering to pay attention a moment later, when they saw the correct answer? Fundamentally, this study separated students who just wanted to do well on the test from students who really wanted to learn new material.

Before the testing, the students had filled out a questionnaire to assess their motivation personality. Based on their responses, Dweck and Mangels split them into two groups. One group was concerned, primarily, with being better than others. They agreed with statements like, “You have a certain amount of intelligence and you can't do much to change it,” or “It's important to me to be smarter than other students.” The other group disagreed with those statements, and instead agreed to comments like, “It's very important to me that my coursework offer real challenges.” This latter group wasn't into comparing themselves. Let's call these two groups the *Grade-Hungry* and the *Knowledge-Hungry*.

These attitudes had a significant impact on the EEG readings – the students' motivation personality was visible in the brain waves, on a millisecond to millisecond graph.

The *Grade-Hungry* students paid extremely close attention to the moment of green light/red light – they really were obsessed with whether they got the answer right or wrong. But immediately after, their attention systems took a break. They checked out, and they weren't really paying much attention when the correct answer flashed by.

Respectively, the *Knowledge-Hungry* paid attention (but not quite as obsessively) to whether they were right or wrong, and they paid significantly more attention to the correct answers. They took advantage of the chance to learn. This contrast was most dramatic when each group got an answer wrong. The Knowledge-Hungry activated deep memory regions, indicating they were storing these new facts away for later. Such activity was not nearly as deep in the Grade-Hungry, suggesting a far more cursory interest; instead, their brains seemed to feel threatened by learning they'd gotten an answer wrong. Their brains indicated a far more emotional, fearful response. They clearly did not like being wrong, and they didn't care that Katmandu is in Nepal.

Not surprisingly, when the students were later surprised by a retest, consisting only of the questions they'd gotten wrong the first time around, the Knowledge-Hungry kids did far better.

What do you think? Is your child a grade hungry or knowledge hungry student?

PTA President's Message
Chris Rutledge

I was recently at a Board of Education event with Ms. Sirgo and Mr. Clarke, where we were asked to talk about what our school was most proud of. Without a doubt the answer from the PTA perspective was both the great skills learned by our students, as well as the amazing Woodlin spirit.

I also warned the Board that the combined spirit and energy from the portion of the Woodlin families, as well as that of the Oakland Terrace families I have met, who will go to the new McKenney Hills school, will contribute to a school of undoubtedly energetic and passionate families!

As you have hopefully read on the listserv, the boundary study for the new elementary school at the McKenney Hills site is getting underway. There will be six meetings of the parent advisory committee, but you don't have to be on the committee to attend. The dates of the advisory committee meeting are 3/3, 3/17, 4/14, 5/5, 5/19, and 6/2, all from 7 PM to 8:30 at Sligo Middle School Instructional Media Center). In addition, there will be two public information meetings, also from 7 to 8:30, on **February 24 and May 25** at Newport Mills Middle School.

Some great examples of the Woodlin energy were on display at the Winter Festival. Many many thanks to Melita Flannery, Laura Stewart, Jenn Sawin, Hilary Barker and all the many, many volunteers who helped out. The luau theme made it possible for us all to forget it was still winter, if only for three hours!

The next big events on the calendar are the Spring Book Fair (thanks Sydney Trent, Bruce Seaman and Alexis Ruffin) and the Spring Fair (under the leadership of Liz Gayaldo and Charlotte Anderson). We can expect good times for all at both of these events.

As has been noted earlier, we will conduct our elections for next year at the May PTA meeting. Please consider serving as President, Vice President or Secretary, or chairing a committee. Dozens of other volunteers will be needed as well.

Have a great month!

Chris

Winter Festival and Silent Auction a Success - Thanks to All

We would like to send a out a tremendous thank you to all the volunteers and the Woodlin community for supporting our yearly Winter Festival and Silent Auction. This is a major event for the PTA and the proceeds support all we do through the year. It took lots of phone calls, mailings, auction pick-ups, planning, set up, help with activities, and clean up.

First, thanks to Jen Sawin and Hilary Dick for taking on the auction, a daunting task. We give a special thanks to Mary Press and her new company (Melita Flannery is also a partner) Creatively Designed by M and M for the great decorations. The following lead volunteers for the Winter Festival helped everything run smoothly: Eve Zimmerman (jewelry) Marguerite Gieble (gym) Amy Williamson (food) Berti Lopiccolo (crafts) Krista Middlebrooks (teacher raffle) Edelweiss Calcagno (book room) and Sonja Essen (face painting.) All the support from the volunteers, some working multiple hours, was an inspiring sight! They include Shawnie Johnson, Rachel Posel, Rachel Shapiro, Katherine Rowell, Mattie, Taisha, and Kevin Sims, Rayna Klein, Katherine and Griffin Rowell, Ana Aslan, Laurie McWright, Lawrence Freidman, Ramesh Kurup, Susan Morawetz, Monica Feit, Noelle Kurtin, Juliana Ballard, Abigail Hoffman, Kim Love, Vickie Rocha, Marie Hull, Karla Kramer, Carolyn Yancy, Lisa Tenley and 5th grade helpers, Jane Curtin, and Chris Rutlege.

Thanks also to the All Star Kids Tumblebus of Silver Spring, a gymnastics center on wheels, for giving us a reduced rate for their service. They really connect with the kids. Please consider supporting this local business the next time you think about your next birthday party plans. Their website is <http://asktumblebus.com/>. Thanks to Armand's Pizza who provided great food as usual, and Maui Wowi www.kapotrading.com who added a tropical flair with their awesome shaved ice and smoothies! We also thank DC Hippodrome for the dancing entertainment.

Also thanks to Ms. Schaufelberger, Ms. Beeson, and Mrs. Grant who generously let us use their classrooms. Thank you to Mrs. Sirgo and Mr. Clarke for all their help and thanks to Tony, Marvin Anderson, and the building engineers for all their hard work setting up and cleaning up such a large function.

Laura Stewart, Woodlin PTA Fund Raising Chair and
Melita Flannery, Winter Festival Co-Chair.

PTA Flower Sale is Almost Here!

Watch for the order forms for this year's PTA flower sale in early March. The order deadline will be later that month.

For those of new to Woodlin, the Woodlin PTA holds the flower sale during the Spring Fair in May (usually the day before Mother's Day). You can pick up your pre-ordered flowers, and we will sell baskets and perennials at the fair. However, for the best selection it's best to place a pre-order. The flowers are perennials and available in hanging baskets and 4-inch pots.

We order flowers from the Walnut Springs Nursery in Howard County. Photos of the flowers will be on the Woodlin PTA website in early March (many thanks to webmaster Jane Curtin for making this possible).

If you have any questions (or would like to volunteer), please contact Vickie Rocha or Michael Horowitz, horocha@msn.com, 301-588-6078.

WOODLIN Geography ★ WIZARD ★

Woodlin Wizards – The Geography Bee is ON!

Participate in the Geography Bee and you'll have the world at your fingertips! All third, fourth, and fifth graders are encouraged to accept this challenge -- and parents, we need your help, too!

The competitions will be held at 2:00 pm on the following dates:

5th grade: April 14

3rd grade: May 12

4th grade: May 19

Fifth graders now have their packets and their preliminary Bee will be held March 24. For remaining grades, packets will be distributed in March and all students are encouraged to complete it for a chance to try out for their class team. Every student who completes their packet will receive an official Woodlin Wizard Geography Bee water bottle! The fifth graders saw the bottles at our Geo Bee Pep Rally last week and they got an enthusiastic thumbs-up! Ask your fifth grader which question stumped everyone! Hint: it involved President Obama's upbringing! Also ask them which 5th grader is a geography super star -- he's lived in 4 countries in the past five years!

Parents, encourage your child to complete their packet – it is a great way to do something fun together and gives your whole family a chance to brush up on their knowledge of the world. Parents are also needed to help run preliminary Bees in the 3rd and 4th grade classes to determine which students will represent their class, and there is plenty of assistance needed the day of the event, too. To volunteer, email Jane Curtin at jane_curtin@yahoo.com.

Go Geo Wizards, go!

Winners Take All Family Read

With author and KidsPost columnist Fred Bowen

For 4th and 5th graders and the grownups who love them.

Back by popular demand, Woodlin is sponsoring a reading group for parents around the book ***Winners Take All***.

Fourth and 5th grade students will receive a form to registration and order

the book by Fred Bowen, who is also a KidsPost columnist. Students will be ***Winners Take All*** with a parent or guardian on their own (yes, grownups



students and

asked to read
read it too!)

and then come to Woodlin the evening of and April 7 to talk about it with Fred Bowen, and other families.

Fred is a very interesting and entertaining speaker. Best of all, the book is a very compelling baseball story with lots to discuss. It's about a good kid who makes a bad decision to cheat in a big game, and it raises interesting issues about keeping secrets, making excuses, and trying to do the right thing.

So sign up, read the book, and come ready to talk! The hour-long program is the same night as the book fair: so come to the Family Read Discussion and then go to the book fair! If you have a question, contact Dianne Tencer, Woodlin's reading specialist.

Don't forget to support Woodlin when you grocery shop!

Sniders Receipts

Sniders receipts can be turned in to the Sniders box on the shelves in the copy/mailroom or sent via backpack mail. Please include the entire receipt, especially the date. Snider's gives us 1 percent back on purchases. Encourage your neighbors to give you their receipts.

Giant/Safeway Cards

Register your Giant (<http://www.giantfood.com/aplus?opco=GNTL>) and Safeway (<https://secure.escrip.com/jsp/supporter/registration/step1.jsp>) savings cards to support Woodlin. You must re-register your card every fall. Family and friends can also register their cards. Our Giant ID is #00913. Our Safeway ID is #6589421. If you would like help registering your card, please email wesretailcards@gmail.com or call Heather Lair at 301-891-8452. If every family participated, Woodlin would earn over \$10,000 annually!

Please take a minute and register your cards today!

Woodlin directory

The PTA will continue to update the Woodlin directory for the rest of the school year and electronic copies will be provided upon request to those with a child at the school.

For more information, contact Ellen Edge at eeedge@yahoo.com.

Shining Stars

Shining Stars is a program that was started last year at Woodlin to provide an opportunity for students to nominate their peers when they see them perform positive actions that are helpful to the school community. Shining Star nomination folders have been placed on each teacher's desk. Please encourage students to nominate their classmates when they observe Woodlin Wizards helping each other. Students who received Shining Stars last month include the following:

Shining Stars for February:

1st grade: Truman Dickerson

2nd grade: Joshua McClane

3rd grade Lochlin Davis

4th grade: Catherine Edge

5th grade: Justin Anderson

Book Suggestions from Readers' Lunch Bunches – Several times a week, Shannon Parkin, a mom of two at Woodlin, meets with some of the 3rd and 4th graders to read to them during their lunch times. She has listed some of their favorite books from these students:

February Book Suggestions from Readers' Lunch Bunches

Third Grade Favorites

Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill and L. Beith

Life as a Knight: An Interactive History Adventure by Rachel Hanel

Jane Goodall: Animal Scientist (Graphic Biographies) by Katherine Krohn and C. Martin

The Great White House Breakout by Helen Thomas

Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters by Barack Obama

Fourth Grade Favorites

Marie Curie and Radioactivity Graphic Library by Connie Miller

Henry Ford and the Model T (Inventions and Discovery Series) by Michael O' Hearn

Molly Pitcher: Young American Patriot (Graphic Biographies) by Jason Glaser

The Maze of Bones (39 Clues: Book 1) by Rick Riordan

Freddy Goes to Florida by Walter Brooks

Compiled by Shannon Parkin (mother of Heather (grade 3) and Carl (kindergarten))