

# BLAST

Bedford • Lifelong Learning • Achievement • Self-Motivation • Teamwork

Hello from Bedford:



Our school is alive with energy and excitement. Faculty members are working closely on teams at each grade, designing curriculum-based lessons to meet the learning styles of all our students. The enthusiasm demonstrated by staff and students for learning is energizing.

Each grade-level team meets four days a week. The meetings are devoted to aspects of the curriculum, schedule changes, student concerns and parent meetings. Teachers share their observations about how students are learning and define ways to improve their delivery of instruction. On the fifth day, all teams at each grade level meet to insure curricular consistency and equitable experiences for all our students. They share their ideas about curriculum, plan activities and organize interdisciplinary units.

In addition, each team meets with a special education teacher assigned to monitor curricular activities and events. These teachers align their classroom activities with grade level curricula. This allows for a healthy, multidimensional team whose membership is balanced and informed.

The library and technology teachers also communicate with each team to provide curriculum-based experiences for students at each grade. The communication process between these teachers is complex. However, regular team meetings and bi-monthly Leadership Team Meetings accomplish this communication task exceptionally well.

I am sincerely impressed by the dedication, knowledge and collaboration of our teachers at BMS.

In January we all had the pleasure of watching eighth graders present their final computer projects. The project requires students to research a new business for Westport with charts, graphs, financial planning, PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheets and a logo. I was very impressed with the quality of their computer work and presentations.

BMS continues efforts to support those in need as a result of the Tsunami disaster. Grade Seven had a penny war and raised \$2694.00 for Save the Children. Mr. Walto, a representative from Save the Children, came to accept the check from students and shared some amazing stories from South East Asia with the students. Grade Six had an afternoon fair selling goods made by the students and faculty: cookies, cupcakes, bracelets, necklaces and raffle tickets to throw cream pie at several of the teachers and Ms. Raneri. They raised \$3,000. Student Government has organized Dollars for Donuts, Pajama Day and Share Your Allowance Day to further raise funds for the Tsunami victims. I am proud of how our school has organized activities to help other people in their time of need.

At this time of year, Ms. Raneri, Mrs. Emmerthal and I continue observing non-tenured and tenured teachers in a variety of situations: in classrooms, with their teams and with parents. Our objective is to help teachers meet Westport's standards for effective teaching and learn how to be reflective practitioners.

We are also in the process of planning our transition activities for students coming to BMS and students going to Staples. When the plan is finished, I am sure there will be many opportunities for parents and students to visit the schools they will be entering next fall. Specific transition meetings will be planned for students with special needs and 504 plans. You will receive a schedule of these events shortly.

## A Few Reminders.....

Please do not drop your children at Bedford before 7:30 in the morning. Students who arrive before 7:30 are not supervised by an adult at BMS. Some students say they are coming for help classes but never show up. Instead, they stay with their friends and chat.

The same issue exists after school. Some students like to hang out here or walk over to Staples when the school day is over. Again, there is no one here to supervise students after school. Students should go home or to a friend's house at the end of the school day unless they are in the play or after school program, Club Bedford.

These early arrivals and after school stragglers could potentially make bad decisions or be injured in the school and no one would know they were here. I am sure you understand my concerns and will comply with my request. Thanks for your help!

**Angela Wormser**

***Part of teaching is helping students learn how to tolerate ambiguity, consider possibilities and ask questions that are unanswerable.***

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot

## PTA PRESIDENTS' LETTER

Dear Bedford Families:

Our return from the holiday break was a little different this year. The focus was less on ourselves, and our plans for the remainder of the school year, and we were all very much in tuned to the tragedy which overwhelmed the international community following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Southeast Asia. The students were able to respond as a school community by helping to raise funds for immediate relief services. Through the efforts of our principals and teachers, and our student council, a number of fundraising efforts were successfully undertaken by each grade level. We are overjoyed by the enthusiasm and generosity of our community in responding to the needs of others.

We felt that it was equally important that the PTA initiate a fundraising effort to assist in the long term rebuilding process which will consume the region for years to come. We invited the PTA's from our other Westport schools to join us in this collaborative effort. Our intention is to demonstrate to our children that every little bit helps and the collective contributions of a community can have a meaningful impact. Our plan is to produce t-shirts at a nominal cost, with all profits going to *tsunami relief*. A letter will be going home to all of you providing greater detail. Please join us in demonstrating our support to this worthy endeavor.

At this time of the year, many of us are overwhelmed with pleas for support to a number of worthwhile organizations. The demand for contributions is considerable and we have thus become more selective in our giving. We are sure, to many of you, the PTA is one such organization which is constantly trying to raise funds. Therefore, we think it is important that you understand exactly how these fundraising dollars are spent.

At BMS, the net operating budget of the PTA is roughly \$30,000. 67% of these funds are re-allocated back into the school either to fund a *Bear Grant*, an *Educational Resource Contribution* offered to every teacher, a library donation from the PTA, the Principal's Fund which helps defray the costs of field trips and other expenses of students in need, and donations to support Cultural Arts Programs, camperships, tuition assistance, to name a few. The remainder of our operating budget covers such things as Postage, Beautification, Teacher/Staff Recognition, Insurance, Audits, and Dues to State PTA. We also help defray the costs of numerous community events benefiting many of our students.

We traditionally send out a letter in January seeking contributions through our *Non-Event Fundraiser*. We consider this to be one of our most important fundraisers because every dollar raised goes directly to fulfilling a Principal's/Staff Wish List. Throughout the year, a list is compiled requesting items which will benefit the programs

offered through our school. In prior years, we have purchased such things as audio/video equipment to enhance our television station, heart rate monitors for our Fitness programs, and additional language tapes for our Foreign Language Lab.

This year, we have delayed the mailing of our *Non-Event Pamphlet* until later in February, recognizing the extraordinary demand for funds in January to support tsunami relief. We hope you will consider supporting us again this year and truly appreciate your generosity. Rest assured, your contributions are well spent and positively enhance our programs and the educational experience at BMS. If any of you have questions about how we spend our fundraising dollars, please don't hesitate to call us at any time. We are always eager to discuss this and other issues and are open to any suggestions from the community.

We look forward to serving the Bedford community for the remainder of the year. We have many exciting events coming up in the next couple of months and hope to see you all there!

**Julie Walsh**  
Jwalsh0007@aol.com  
259-2621

**Georgia Adams**  
Cadams@optonline.net  
256-8515

*PTA Co-Presidents*

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## THANK YOU

Thank you to **Sue Colasurdo** and **Beth Hagan** for organizing a fun evening with Beach Blanket Bingo. Thank you also to **Betsy Pollak** for donating most of the prizes, **Steve Rudinger** for calling the games, **Julie Walsh** for helping with ticket sales and **all of the parents** who donated baked goods and who chaperoned. The night was a lot of fun!

Thank you to **Cheryl Sugel** for supplying refreshments for the January PTA meeting. We also thank **Dr. Elliott Landon** for taking time out of his busy schedule to come talk to us about upcoming issues with the school system.

A special thank you to **Marge French**, **Kevin Slater** and **Karen Manion** for the many hours they have spent with our performers in **Honk!** Thank you also to **Nan Richards**, **Heli Stagg**, and **Nancy Stewart** for your dedication. We look forward to seeing all of our talented BMS performers on stage later this month!

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## MARCH PTA MEETING Wednesday March 30, 7:30 PM

**Dr. Alvin Rosenfeld, guest speaker**  
Author of *The Over-Scheduled Child*  
and creator of Family Night

## VOLUNTEERS

### BEDFORD PTA 2005/2006 POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The process has begun to fill PTA Board Positions for the 2005/2006 school year. Participation can be personally rewarding, and more importantly, it enhances the educational experience of our children. Please consider taking a position.

**We would love to hear from YOU!** Whether you are interested in an Executive or General Board position, please contact one of the following Nominating Committee members to discuss opportunities:

**Mary Ellen Gallagher**, jgallag@optonline.net, 226-6623  
**Jill Bicks**, jlbicks@optonline.net 222-3848  
**Janis Collins**, jmcollins@optonline.net 222-9712  
**Sheila Flinn**, sflinn@optonline.net 255-9253  
**Jackie Grundei**, grundei4@sbcglobal.net 227-0333  
**Beth Lloyd-Thomas**, hbms@optonline.net 254-8180  
**Karen Mulreed**, staple4040@hotmail.com 227-8117

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### PTA Council Nominating Committee

Volunteers needed from each school for PTA Council Nominating Committee to establish slate for Executive Board and Standing Committee Chairs. The committee will meet a couple of times in February. Minimum phone calling and follow up time is required. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Nora Jinishian**, PTA Council Past President & Nominating Chair, Ajinishi@optonline.net, 454-7964.

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### PTA Council Positions Available

If you are interested in serving on PTA Council in one of the executive board or Committee Chair positions such as Town-wide Art Show, Nutrition-Transportation, Positive Youth Liaison, Gifted Services or Voter Registration, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Nora Jinishian**, PTA Council past president & Nominating Chair, Ajinishi@optonline.net, 454-7964

## STAPLES PTA NOMINATING

The Staples High School PTA Nominating Chairs are seeking volunteers to staff the 2005 Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will meet several times beginning this month to fill the slate of PTA vacancies for the 2005-06 school year, including executive board positions. Ideally, we would like one parent volunteer from grades 9 through 11, in addition to one 8th grade parent volunteer from each middle school so we can reach the broadest possible range of parents.

Nominating Committee offers parents an opportunity to shape next year's PTA with a minimal meeting commitment. Much of our work can be done at home via email and telephone.

Thousands of volunteer hours are needed each year to support PTA activities such as Homecoming, post-prom and post grad events, fundraising, teacher appreciation, Back-to-School Night, email updates and the production of the newsletter. Parents who know they would like to serve on next year's PTA, whether they have a specific job in mind or would simply like to be involved in any capacity, are encouraged to step forward. We would be grateful for your support. Interested parents should contact **Donna Smirniotopoulos** (dsmirniotopoulos@aol.com) 454-0898 or **Michele Mitnick** (mmitnick@aol.com) 254-2564.

## FUNDRAISING

### BMS PTA FUNDRAISING VP'S

**Lynn Grossman**, 259 2378,  
lynn.grossman@smithbarney.com  
**Lynn Nicklin**, 222 7328, nicklinfamily@optonline.net

### NON -EVENT FUNDRAISER

Every year in January, the Bedford PTA launches its fundraising initiative to solicit funds to fulfill a *Wish List* generated by the staff and administration of BMS. We have traditionally raised between \$5000 and \$6000 a year through this *Non-Event Fundraiser*. We continue to believe that this is one of our most important fundraisers because every dollar generated goes directly to purchase items which enhance our programs and curriculum. A significant request on this year's list is a screen and projector for every pod. While we can't always fulfill every request, we strive to do as much as our funds permit.

You will be receiving your *Non-Event Pamphlet* later this month. Please consider supporting us in this most worthwhile endeavor. All contributions are fully tax deductible. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity and support.

## BEDFORD BASKETBALL BASH

The Bedford Student v Faculty Basketball Game and Silent Auction fundraising event will be held on Friday evening **March 11<sup>th</sup>**. The doors open at 6:15 PM, and the game runs from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Ticket order forms are enclosed in this edition of Blast.

This is a whole school event and fundraiser. All students will have an opportunity to participate in some aspect of the event. There will be free throw contests at half time and lots of food and beverages as well as amazing items for auction that will appeal to the whole family.

For the silent auction there are three ways in which we really need your help:

We will be auctioning off a variety of really great themed baskets. **Pat McIntosh** is coordinating this effort. We need families to contribute items to be included in the baskets. Please call Pat (454-5629) for a list of the themes and suggestions as to what you can contribute.

We will also be showcasing individual items for auction. We are asking you to give some thought as to what you can contribute. Think of things that would appeal to you and the Bedford community. Please call **Lynn Grossman** (259-2378) with your donations. Items we would love to include:

- Tickets to sporting events, concerts, television shows, theatre productions, awards ceremonies, etc.
- Weekend or longer vacation getaways
- Catering, cooking lessons or other party/entertaining services
- Sports equipment or memorabilia.
- Personal spa or beauty services
- Jewelry you have made
- Design services
- Photography
- ANYTHING THAT IS FUN AND APPEALING TO OUR COMMUNITY

The third way you can contribute is to COME, PARTICIPATE AND HAVE FUN!!

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## MAGAZINE DRIVE CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS

Congratulations to the 6th grade homeroom of Mrs. Sakuma, 7th grade homeroom of Mrs. Clark and the 8th grade homeroom of Mrs. Noonan. They are the winners of a pizza party for their participation in our magazine drive. Congratulations also to Shannon Murphy, the winner of our drawing for a night out at the movies for 4. Thanks to all who participated!!!

## SCHOOL NEWS

### HOLIDAY GIFTS – THANK YOU!!

**Patty Haberstroh**  
Westport Holiday Giving Program Coordinator

On behalf of the Westport Department of Human Services, I would like to thank you, the parents, students and teachers of Bedford Middle School whose generosity helped make the holidays brighter for so many of your fellow Westport residents. By donating gift cards and the teams shopping for the wish lists of several individual families *in addition* to gift cards, you brought holiday joy to scores of families who may not have had much to celebrate. Overall, upwards of 328 individuals, including 193 children, were helped in Westport through this town-wide holiday effort. Bedford, your enthusiasm and caring are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

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### Band Festival

March is designated as “Music in Our Schools Month” by the Music Educators National Conference, an organization representing over 56,000 music educators nationwide. To celebrate this event each year, the Westport Music Department plans a band or orchestra festival, demonstrating the progression of musical achievement from the beginning to advanced levels. This year the concert will feature over 500 instrumentalists from the middle schools and the high school. All band members in grades six through twelve will be participating. Dr. Daniel D’Addio, Director of Bands at Central Connecticut State University will serve as guest conductor for the festival.



Rehearsals for the festival will take place on March 14 and 15, and the concert will be on **Tuesday, March 15 in the Staples Field House at 8:00 p.m.** More information and a permission slip will be sent home with band members soon. 7:30 p.m. arrival time for performers

Rehearsal times for the two day festival are:  
**Monday, March 14:** Staples Field House  
2:45 – 3:45 p.m. Sixth Grade Band Rehearsal  
4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Seventh Grade Band Rehearsal  
5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Eighth Grade Band Rehearsal

**Note:** 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade parent transportation is needed to and from these rehearsals. 6<sup>th</sup> graders will come by bus, (BMS will walk) from school on Tuesday. 6<sup>th</sup> graders will need parent transportation home at 3:45 p.m.

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### LOST AND FOUND

Lose something? Look for it in the BMS Lost & Found! Where is it? BMS Cafeteria, behind the elevators. Please check often!

## HONK!

February 11, 7:30 PM  
February 12, 2 & 7:30 PM  
February 13, 2 PM

Almost 70 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders will perform Honk!, the winner of Best Musical in London's 2000 theater season. The story of the Ugly Duckling is fun for all ages, and features lots of singing, dancing, and great music. Check out the BMS website, where a Honk! link will tell you more about the show, and how to order tickets. All tickets are \$10, but children age three and under are admitted free. To order tickets, visit the BMS website, or call the Drama line at 341-1567.

(picture removed from Internet version)

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## BEAR GRANTS

**Jackie Grundei**, JMGrundei@aol.com, 227-0333

Each year the Bedford PTA earmarks a portion of the money raised to fund Bear (Bedford Enrichment and Reward) Grants. The Bear Grants Program awards grants for innovative enrichment initiatives proposed by the school community. Please take a look at the Bear Grants section on the BMS website to view more information about Bear Grants and to download a grant application form.

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## BEDFORD BLAST

**Julia Mally** 454-5857, juliamally@earthlink.net  
or **BLAST@westport.k12.ct.us**

Please send submissions by e-mail by copying the text into your message or attaching a file to the email addresses above. The deadline for the March issue is **Friday February 11**.

## INTRAMURAL NEWS

**Intramural coordinators: Tim Lyons and Kristin Ryan**

Basketball intramurals ended successfully on Friday January 28th. Basketball was extremely popular with large numbers of students anxious to play day-after-day. Our current intramural offering is floor hockey, which we are also doing in PE, and will run until early March.

6th grade intramurals	Mondays and Wednesdays
7th and 8th intramurals	Tuesdays and Thursdays
All Grades	Friday Mornings

(begins at 6:45 AM, no one admitted after 7:15AM)

Our intramural program here at BMS is open to ALL students, and ALL students are encouraged to join the fun, regardless of athletic prowess. Students are welcome to participate anytime their schedule allows. We aim to please!!

Parents – Important! Afternoon Intramural pickup is at 4:15 sharp!! Please be timely. Students needing to be picked up early from intramurals must be escorted directly from the activity by their guardian. Students will not be allowed to leave early unescorted. If you have any questions regarding intramurals please call Tim Lyons, 341-1514, or Kristin Ryan, 341-1512.

## GUIDANCE

### BEREAVEMENT GROUP

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade counselor will be running a bereavement group for 6<sup>th</sup> graders beginning in late January and continuing through the end of the third quarter. The group will focus on the death of a sibling and is intended to provide a safe place for student's to share their experiences and feelings with their peers. For more information or questions, please contact **Mrs. Michael** directly (341-2462) or have your child look for details to come on BAM.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

### Information and News about . . . Spedparents

**Bedford Representatives**  
**Nancy Clarke** 221-1276, neclarke@sbcglobal.net  
**Marla Cowden** 454-2387, cowden@optonline.net

Does your child take medication? Many children take some kind of medication, at some time. Children with special needs may be more likely to be on medication to manage issues such as mood disorders, seizures, anxiety, or hyperactivity. Or, your child may be taking a common over-the-counter pain killer or cold remedy.

Parents ask whether they need to inform the school about the medication their child is taking. This choice is up to the parents, but should be made carefully. Some parents feel that this is a privacy issue and have no desire to divulge this information. They may feel that they don't want their child viewed in a negative light because of the medication. Occasionally, a doctor may advise parents not to inform the school initially when a child is being introduced to a new kind of medication with behavior or learning effects, or a dosage is being changed, in order to prevent biasing the staff in reporting observations of changes.

However, it is important to realize that there are some risks associated with this choice. For example, if school staff members do not know a child is on a medication, and he or she experiences a negative reaction to it, they will be unable to rapidly assess the cause and intervene accordingly. Further, some medications interact with each other, and it may not be safe for staff to give a child Tylenol, for example, if the child has another medication in his or her system.

For some parents an option is to inform the school nurse only. It can be requested that this information not be shared with teachers or staff. Another safety measure is to make sure that your child's pediatrician (who may not be the one who prescribed the medication) is informed and that it is in the child's file, since the school nurse would call the pediatrician in the event of an emergency. For some parents, the question of telling or not telling the school is not an issue. For others it is important to balance the risks and benefits.

**January 26: Our Place. The Place To Be for Young Adults.** The Kennedy Center offers this group for Young Adults ages 17-21 with special needs entering those transitional years into their 20s! For More Information Call Opportunities Unlimited (203) 332-4535 ext. 223 or email us at [oppunlimited@kennedyctr.org](mailto:oppunlimited@kennedyctr.org).

**February 4:** Friday. SPED\*NET Wilton. **Talking About Sexuality: A Unique Challenge for Parents of Children with Special Needs.** . Held at the Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT. 10 am to 12:30 pm. RSVP to Lory McCabe at (203) 761-9171

**February 9: General Meeting.** 7:00 PM. Fairfield SEPTA meetings are held every month, September-June on the second Wednesday of the month in Jennings School cafeteria on 31 Palm Drive in Fairfield, CT. More information can be found at <http://www.fairfieldsepta.org/> or call Cathy Petrone at 203-259-9931.

**February 9:** SCOPES meeting. Held at the Rippowam Middle School Media Center (2nd floor). 7-7:30 pm, Refreshments & networking, 7:30 pm: Planning for Summer 2005. **Start planning now for your child with special needs.** Discussion will include Extended School Year programs, available summer school options, camps and recreational opportunities. Sponsored by SCOPES

(Stamford Coalition of Parents of Exceptional Students) <http://www.scopesnetwork.org/>. Call Judi Sohn at 219-1810 or Beryl Williams, School Family Resource Facilitator at 977-4465.

**February 10:** Thursday, 7 to 9 pm. **Teen Activity Sessions,** held at Kennedy Center's Senior Option, 12 Cambridge Drive, Trumbull, CT. Game night! There is a \$7.00 activity fee for each session. For further information or to RSVP call Lisa Okrongly, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with Opportunities Unlimited, at (203) 332-4535 ext. 223.

**February 19: Tri-State Support Network for Families of Children with Bipolar Disorder** Meets on the third Saturday of every month, from 10 AM - 12 Noon, at ARC Youth Division, 132 East Putnam Avenue, Cos Cob, CT 06807 (above the Food Mart). Lolli Ross: [ross@arcgreenwich.org](mailto:ross@arcgreenwich.org) or call: (203) 629 -1880 ext. 132.

**February 22: Tourette Syndrome Support Group Meeting.** Meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month from 10:30 - 12:30 in the Wilton Library Community Room, 137 Old Ridgefield Rd, Wilton, CT. For more info, contact: Chris Phelps-Thiry 762-0664 or [DRCPT@aol.com](mailto:DRCPT@aol.com).

**February 23: Eileen Luddy, Ph.D,** presenter. Wednesday. 9:30 to 11:30 am. **Creating Independence: What every parent needs to know.** Held at the Darien YWCA, .49 Old King's Highway North. Darien, CT. Sponsored by STEPs of Darien. To RSVP or to find out more about STEP's, please call the YWCA at (203) 655-2535 extension 61. You can also reach them at [YWCASTEPSDarien@aol.com](mailto:YWCASTEPSDarien@aol.com).

**February 23: Our Place. The Place To Be for Young Adults.** Wednesday evenings from 7:00-9:00 p.m. The Kennedy Center, 12 Cambridge Drive, Trumbull, CT 06611. There is a fee of \$10 per session, and registration is required. For More Information Call Opportunities Unlimited (203) 332-4535 ext. 223 or email us at [oppunlimited@kennedyctr.org](mailto:oppunlimited@kennedyctr.org).

**February 24:** 6:30 P.M. Thursday. **Planning For The Future of Your Child or Dependent with Special Needs.** Important Issues That Need To Be Addressed: Government Benefit Eligibility, Guardianship and Conservatorship/Guardian Ad Litem, Financial Security and Funding The workshop will be held at Putnam Park, 100 Great Meadow Road, 1st Floor conference room, Wethersfield, CT. Please RSVP to Heather Barrett (860) 258-3810 or [habarrett@metlife.com](mailto:habarrett@metlife.com).

## December & January Events at BMS

### Holiday Giving

Each grade had several donation programs for the holidays. The 6th Grade collected over 300 toys which were sent to an inner city school. The parents at that school earn tickets by volunteering at the school, and the tickets are redeemed for a toy they choose for their child. The 7th Grade collected over 200 toys for an inner city children's hospital. Eighth Grade students had many activities: a penny war that raised almost \$1500, soda and bake sales, a hat "sale", candy grams, and family donations in support of the Westport Department of Human Services.

(picture removed)

Sixth grade students work with art teacher Cecily Cowburn to transport some of the more than 5000 canned and dry foods donated by Bedford families for local food banks.

(picture removed)

7th Grade students delivered more than 200 toys to an inner city children's hospital.

(picture removed)

Eight Grade students display some of the items purchased through fundraisers for needy Westport families.

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### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Holiday Concert

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The orchestra gets into the seasonal spirit.

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Chorus

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Fair in December

All 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students worked on projects designed to teach scientific methods and analysis. After the topics were chosen, the students had to research existing studies, devise and carry out experiments, create charts of the data, write a report, and draw conclusions from their analyses. The culmination of the project was the creation of a tri-fold display board and oral project presentation to a guest teacher, scientist or invited guest

(pictures removed)

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Computer Class Business Presentations in January

Students in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Computer classes worked on a two-semester project designed to make use of many computer skills. Students had to create a store or business that could be opened in Westport, research the costs and set-up requirements, create a business name and logo, perform a market survey and graph the results, put together a business plan, and create marketing materials, such as a business card and brochure. For the final step of the project, the students created a PowerPoint presentation and "marketed" their project to a panel of teachers and local business professionals.

(pictures removed)

## TOWN EDUCATION ISSUES

Diana Weller, [dbweller@optonline.net](mailto:dbweller@optonline.net)

### 05/06 WESTPORT SCHOOL CALENDAR APPROVED; FIRST DAY 9/6/05

On January 3, the Board of Education approved the school calendar for the 2005-06 school year. The 05/06 school calendar starts with a post-Labor Day school start date of September 6 to accommodate the Staples Building project. The calendar also includes school attendance on Columbus Day (10/6); a holiday recess of 12/24-1/2; a winter recess of 2/18-2/26; a spring recess of 4/14-23; and the last day of school falling on 6/23, 6/26 for staff. If there are no snow days, students' last day will be June 20 and Staff June 21.

The following holidays will also be observed: 10/4 Rosh Hashanah; 10/13 Yom Kippur; 11/8 Election Day; 11/24-25 off for Thanksgiving; 1/16 Martin Luther King Day; and 5/29 Memorial Day.

### DR. LANDON PROPOSES 05/06 ED BUDGET TO BOE: \$79,523,190, +6.5%

On January 10, Dr. Elliott Landon presented to the BOE his recommended 05/06 ed budget of \$79,523,190, +6.5% vs. this year's ed budget. With a projected enrollment increase of 59 students next year, the proposed cost per pupil will increase 5.32% to \$14,806. The proposed budget represents a decline in rate of increase in both absolute dollars and cost per pupil. For perspective, the 04/05 budget was a 6.6% increase over the previous year, and the 04/05 increase in cost per pupil was 5.48% above 03/04.

At the 1/10 BOE meeting, Dr. Landon explained that approximately 4.5% or 70% of the proposed 05/06 increase is directly related to the continuation of necessary current services. The remainder is required for enrollment increases (+58 students at the high school level, the most expensive level to educate) and some program enhancements.

Dr. Landon's proposed budget addresses the following priorities:

1. Maintaining the excellent class sizes at the el and middle school levels and attempting to reduce academic class size at Staples sufficiently to be consistent with the average class sizes enjoyed by students in other schools in Staples' Educational Reference Group (ERG).
2. Providing program opportunities at Staples that have previously been unavailable due to lack of classroom space.
3. Providing teachers with the tools to better enable them to deal with differentiation of instruction for those in need of academic support and those requiring greater academic challenges.

4. Expanding world language study at the high school with new offerings in Mandarin Chinese and Italian, to supplement current offerings of Spanish in K-5; French and Spanish in grades 7-12; and German and Latin in Grades 9-12.
5. Funding restorative maintenance to the level necessary to protect the capital investment made in all school facilities.
6. Confronting the extraordinary projected increases in expenditures associated with health and medical insurance as well as energy costs.
7. Enhancing and improving school transportation services.

The BOE will mostly vote on the budget early February, and the budget request is then submitted to the Town. Throughout the month of March, the BOF will be reviewing the budget, with a vote in early April. Please look for upcoming Board of Finance and RTM meeting dates as they are announced, and attend the meetings to voice your support for the Education budget.

### ACTUAL 04/05 & PROJECTED 05/06 AND BEYOND ENROLLMENT FIGURES RELEASED

On Nov. 22nd, Dr. Landon presented to the BOE actual 04/05 Westport School Enrollment and Projections for 05/06 and beyond. As of 10/1, current school enrollment was 5230, an increase of 54 students. Additionally there were 51 pre-k students and 25 special ed placements.

This growth occurred at the middle and high school levels, which gained 54 and 59 students, respectively. The increases there were offset by a decrease in el enrollment of 59 students. The high school population will continue to grow as the larger middle school classes move through. The middle level has shown modest growth: the two middle schools currently serve 1278 students in grades 6-8, vs. 1224 last year. These numbers are expected to increase gradually as the larger elementary grades move up.

Projecting forward, the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) indicates peak enrollment at Staples at 1687 in 2010/11. This has implications for the Staples project which is expanding the high school to accommodate a 1650 student population with the flexibility to add on if necessary for an 1800 student capacity. Since demographers are less confident about projections more than five years out, the anticipated enrollment decline is speculative. Therefore, the built-in flexibility of the Staples expansion plan gives a measure of security against future overcrowding of the high school. Current enrollment at Staples is at 1459 and projects to 1519 in 05/06; 1589 in 06/07; 1641 in 07/08; 1658 in 08/09; 1673 in 09/10; 1687 in 10/11; 1645 in 11/12, dropping to 1621 in 2112-13.

At the middle school level, NESDEC projects BMS at or above capacity for 4 years: current BMS enrollment, 784 grows to 802 in '06, 817 in '07, 825 in '08, 807 in '09, then

down to 765 in '10. CMS enrollment peaks in '06 at 501, then drops to 465 in '07, 475 in '08, 454 in '09, and 462 in '10.

Lastly, at the el level, enrollment is projected to remain above 2400 until 07/08. Thereafter enrollment is projected to decline a total of approximately 150 students over the next 8 years.

### **SBC REQUESTS ADDITIONAL \$2.5MM FOR STAPLES PROJECT**

The School Building Committee was scheduled to go before the BOE 1/18 to seek approval for a request from the BOF for \$2.5 million in additional funds to complete the Staples Project. This request had been anticipated because when the BOF initially approved funds for the project it approved \$73MM, \$5 million less than the request, and urged the SBC to return to the BOF at a later date for additional funds if needed. It is anticipated that the BOF will approve the additional funds.

### **STAPLES PRINCIPAL SEARCH UNDERWAY**

At the 1/13 BMS PTA meeting, Dr. Landon stated that 3/1 is the deadline for applicants to apply for the position; interviews with applicants will be held during the month of March, and optimally, a candidate recommendation will be presented to the BOE in early April.

## **COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

### **ParentConnect 6,7,8**

You are invited to come and participate in the lively discussion groups that are ParentConnect! The groups are professionally facilitated by Barbara Levy-Berliner, parent educator. The groups' discussions range in topics from peer group issues, school, outside activities, setting limits, parties--you name it, if it concerns your children, we discuss it at ParentConnect! Please direct further questions to Renee goddu @ 221-1540.

### **PLEASE COME SEE WHAT PARENTCONNECT IS ALL ABOUT!!**

**PARENTCONNECT6: Thurs. Feb. 10 Noon - 1:30 PM**

**PARENTCONNECT7: Thurs. Feb. 10 9:30 - 11:00 AM**

**PARENTCONNECT8: Tues. Feb. 8 Noon - 1:30 PM**

All meetings are held at Christ & Holy Trinity Church.

## **A Westport Community Forum: ANTIDEPRESSANTS AND THE RISK OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR IN ADOLESCENTS**

**Thursday February 3, 7:30 – 9:00 PM**

Toquet Hall

Sponsored by Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services, Westport's Positive Youth Development Initiative and the Westport Public Schools

**Keynote Speaker: David Shaffer, FRCP, FRCPsych,** Irving Philips Professor of Child Psychiatry, Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons; Child Psychiatry Division Chief, New York State Psychiatric Institute.

In October 2004 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning about increased risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in children and adolescents treated with antidepressant medications. The risk was identified when researchers analyzed behaviors reported by some of the 4,400 youth who participated in research studies in the past several years. The FDA concluded that there is a greater risk of suicidal thinking and self-harm behavior during the first few months of treatment in those receiving antidepressants.

The FDA's warning raises many questions:

- How did the FDA conclude there were such risks, and why did it take so long given that many of these medications have been available for over 10 years?
- Is my child at risk for suicidal behavior from these medications?
- Should my child discontinue medications that he/she is currently taking?
- What other treatment options are there for teens with depression?

Dr. Schaffer has conducted some of the most influential research on the treatment of adolescent depression, and he recently provided expert testimony to the FDA during its review of suicide risk associated with antidepressant medications. Dr. Schaffer will review the recent FDA hearing process, summarize the challenges faced by affected teens, parents, and caregivers, and address questions submitted by audience members. The forum will be of interest to teens, parents, teachers, and others involved in caring for someone with depression.

*Westport's Positive Youth Development Initiative is a collaboration of the United Way of Westport/Weston, the Westport Public Schools, Westport Department of Human Services, PTA Council and Positive Directions*

## Toy Tag Sale for the Tsunami Children

All proceeds will go to Save the Children.

**Saturday February 5, 10 AM – 4 PM**

Wilton Congregational Church  
70 Ridgefield Rd (Rt. 33), Wilton

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## WINTER FUEL ASSISTANCE

Barbara Butler, Director of Westport's Department of Human Services announced this week that applications are still being taken for fuel assistance programs. The Department of Human Services is currently offering Westport residents an opportunity to apply for energy awards through the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program. The CEAP program is administered through N.E.O.N. Families who are eligible may receive an award from \$200 to \$475. Eligibility is determined by income, and assets. Maximum income is as follows: \$13,965 for a family of one; (elderly and disabled \$18,620); \$18,735 for a family of two (elderly and disabled \$24,980) and \$28,275 for a family of four (\$37,700 elderly and disabled). Asset limits for renters are \$7,000 and for a homeowner, \$10,000, exclusive of residence, furnishings, car and personal effects.

Appointments and home visits may be arranged by calling Westport Town Hall, Room 200, telephone number 341-1050. Once an application has been completed, N.E.O.N. Inc. will determine eligibility and will notify applicants of their approval or denial for assistance.

Through the generosity of many residents, the Westport Warm-Up Fund can be an additional source of fuel assistance for Westport residents of all ages. There is an asset limit of \$25,000, exclusive of residence, furnishings, car and personal effects. The same asset limit applies to the Town Fuel Program with funds appropriated by the Board of Finance and the RTM.

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## Summer Fun in Sailing Program



Cedar Point Yacht Club, in Westport, offers a summer sailing program for members and non-members. Enrollment for the summer of 2005 is **open after February 1st** until classes are filled. The program runs Mondays through Fridays in a 4- or 8-week session, although preference is given to children signing up for the 8-week program. Instruction is available at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels for kids 8 to 17 years old and teaches them how to rig, sail and race their own or chartered boats. More experienced sailors participate in a summer racing circuit at various yacht clubs on Long Island Sound. For more information visit the CPYC website ([www.cedarpointyc.org](http://www.cedarpointyc.org)) and click on the Juniors tab or email [cpycjsailing@optonline.net](mailto:cpycjsailing@optonline.net)

## THE NEW LEARNING THERAPY CENTER

### Chix Chat: A group experience for girls ages 12-14

For girls seeking strategies for dealing with social issues, stress, problem solving, relationships and making positive choices. Group sessions begin in January. Please call for more information: 226-0100 ext. 214

Vicki Katz, LMFT - Ms. Katz is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She is the Director of Social Skills Programming at the New Learning Therapy Center and a clinical affiliate. She is in private practice working with adolescents and their families. She is also the Director of Girlpower Workshops, a self-esteem program for girls.

### Free Discussions

Free discussions open to the public to be held at the center 1200 Post Road East, Westport.

February 16 <sup>th</sup>	11:00-12:00 Wednesday	Beating the Winter Blues Lynda Martone, LMFT
March 9 <sup>th</sup>	11:00-12:00 Wednesday	Disconnect Reconnect Vicki Katz, LMFT
April 13 <sup>th</sup>	11:00-12:00 Wednesday	Healthy Arguing Nancy Hyatt, LCSW
May TBA	11:00-12:00 Wednesday	Transition into Summer

For additional information call 203-226-0100. The New Learning Therapy Center, 1200 Post Road East in Westport, offers comprehensive psychotherapeutic counseling for individuals, couples, families and children. We also offer Social Coaching, Career Direction, Sports Psychology and Life Coaching.

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## SoundWaters

### Vacation Adventure Programs

**February 21 - 25, April 18 – 22**

Camp SoundWaters is a series of science and nature programs for children ages 2-14 offered all summer long. Explore nature, discover wildlife and participate in various hands-on activities including environmental games, sailing, nature crafts, swimming, field trips, canoeing, and more!

Extended hours and scholarships are available for both programs. For information regarding programs please visit our website: [www.soundwaters.org](http://www.soundwaters.org), email [connect@soundwaters.org](mailto:connect@soundwaters.org), call the SoundWaters Registrar: (203) 406-3319. SoundWaters is located in Cove Island Park, 1281 Cove Rd, Stamford, CT 06902. SoundWaters main phone number: (203) 323-1978, fax number: (203) 967-8306. FREE educational activities, view photos of past participants and discover the adventures that await your child at the SoundWaters Open House and Family Day February 12, 10:00am -1:00pm.

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## WESTPORT ARTS CENTER

### Friday, February 4–Friday, March 18 ABOUT PAINT - Gallery Exhibition

Opening Reception: Friday, February 4; 6:30–8:30 PM  
This exhibition will focus on paintings in any painting medium on any surface. The work will be gestural, tactile, and somewhat dependent on “stroke” or “action” in the paint. The Gallery at 51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Mon–Fri 10–4 and Sat–Sun 12–4, FREE

### Folk Concert - Saturday, February 5 MAURA O’CONNELL

Maura O’Connell got noticed playing a scruffy Irish street singer in Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York*, but she is also known for her genre-spanning songs—from old Irish ballads, to sparkling new jazz and pop, to revisited classics by Van Morrison, Lennon and McCartney. O’Connell, of County Clare, Ireland, has an unmistakable, deep and rich voice. 8 PM, Seabury Center, 45 Church Lane, Westport, Adults \$30, under-18 \$5

### Jazz Concert - Saturday, February 12

**THE FRED HERSCH TRIO** - Fred Hersch is a pianist and composer described by the *New Yorker* as “a poet of a pianist” and by *Downbeat* magazine as “one of the small handful of brilliant musicians of his generation. Grammy nominated, with dozens of albums to his credit, Fred Hersch gives a fresh new sound to everything he plays, and will appear with his trio, including John Hebert on bass and Nasheet Waits on drums. This concert is a co-presentation of the Westport Arts Center and the Pequot Library. 8 PM, Pequot Library, 720 Pequot Avenue, Southport. Adults \$30, under-18 \$5

### Youth Program - Monday, February 21 CHILDREN’S WORKSHOPS

On several school vacation days throughout the year, the Westport Arts Center offers hands-on workshops led by enthusiastic artist educators. On Presidents’ Day, children will explore the use of paint, inspired by the innovative gallery exhibition ABOUT PAINT.

10–11:30 AM for children ages 5–7  
1–2:30 PM for children ages 8–10  
\$15, Westport Arts Center, 51 Riverside Avenue, Westport

## EARTHPLACE

**The Nature Discovery Center**  
10 Woodside Lane Westport, CT 06880  
227-7253, [www.earthplace.org](http://www.earthplace.org)

### DINNER FOR THE CRITTERS

**Friday, February 11, 6-8PM, \$15 per person**  
Dinner for the Critters benefits the many resident Ambassadors who call Earthplace home. Enjoy a pasta supper, courtesy of John’s Best Pizza of Westport followed by an animal presentation and stories. Milk and cookies will be served before the animals are “tucked in” for the evening. Tickets make great holiday gifts. Space is limited. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are available now at Earthplace.

### Winter Recess Workshops: Reptiles & Amphibians

**February 22-25** - For Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> Graders  
Are you looking for something fun to do during the school break? Come to Earthplace for an animal adventure as we learn all about reptiles and amphibians! We’ll focus on a different “Featured Creature” each day. 2/22: Snakes, 2/23: Turtles, 2/24: Salamanders, 2/25: Frogs & Toads. The featured animal will be discovered through a live animal program, hands-on projects, trail walk (weather permitting), games and nature investigations. Sign up for one or all of the workshop days! For registration form and fees go to [www.earthplace.org](http://www.earthplace.org) or call 227-7253. Pre-registration is required.

### Eagle Eyes: Nature Detectives

**6 week after school program, meets on Wednesdays  
Begins March 2nd, 4:00-5:15PM  
For 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Graders**

The best way to find out about animals is to watch them. Learn the skills you need to be a nature detective in this backyard forensic science course! Examine skulls, teeth, feathers and fur, and hone up your tracking skills. Observe, classify and analyze evidence. Use your senses to understand real life drama in the natural world. For registration form and fees go to [www.earthplace.org](http://www.earthplace.org) or call 227-7253. Pre-registration is required.

### NATURE SUMMER CAMP

Earthplace summer camp registration begins on **March 2** for new members. The programs are fun, educational and designed to foster an appreciation of the natural world around us. Programs are available for children in preschool through 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The camp runs from June 20 to August 12. Check the website, [www.earthplace.org](http://www.earthplace.org) for details on each age group’s program, and for registration forms.

## WESTPORT CONTINUING EDUCATION

WINTER-SPRING 2005

341-1209, [www.westportcontinuinged.com](http://www.westportcontinuinged.com)

### Middle School After-School Courses

Tennis - Fridays, starts in March 4 BMS  
Hip-jazz in motion – Tuesdays, starts in March at CMS  
Yoga – Fridays, starts in March at BMS & CMS  
Badminton – Wednesdays, starts in March at Bedford  
Irish dancing – Wednesdays, starts in January at BMS  
Beading – Wednesdays, starts in January at BMS & CMS  
Chess - starts in March at Bedford & Coleytown  
Babsitters course – Tuesdays, January at BMS  
Photoshop/illustrator - Saturdays

CLUB BEDford & CLUBcoley - Monday through Friday

Check our website & catalog for dates & times or call 341-1209

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## NOTED PARENTING AUTHOR DR. SYLVIA RIMM TO SPEAK AT “MINDS IN MOTION” EVENT

Dr. Sylvia Rimm, author of numerous books and articles, including *How to Parent so Children Will Learn*, *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades – and What You Can Do About It*, *See Jane Win for Girls* and *How Jane Won*, will be the Keynote Speaker at the Third Annual Westport “Minds in Motion” event. Dr. Rimm’s topic will be “The Pressures Gifted Children Feel: Motivating or Debilitating?” The Keynote Address will be in the Bedford Middle School Auditorium and will run 1:15-2:30pm, including time for questions and answers. A book sale and signing by Dr. Rimm will take place after the address. Everyone is invited to attend the Keynote Address at no charge, whether or not your children register for the “Minds in Motion” program.

The “Minds in Motion” event will take place on Saturday, **March 19** at Bedford Middle School from 12:30-4:00pm. It is an afternoon of fun, fast-paced, hands-on workshops geared to high-ability, motivated children. The workshops are designed to enrich and encourage interested (not necessarily gifted) students in grades K-8. Following the Keynote Address, there will also be workshops for parents on topics related to parenting gifted and high-ability children.

If you have not received the “Minds in Motion” registration brochure and would like one, please email Katie Augustyn at [KPAugustyn@aol.com](mailto:KPAugustyn@aol.com) or call 454-4735.

## DR. ALVIN ROSENFELD

Wednesday, March 30

7:30pm, BMS

“Parenting is today’s most competitive adult sport” says Dr. Rosenfeld, nationally known Child Psychiatrist and author. “Depression and anxiety in children, prevalent in upper middle class communities, can present the same symptoms as ADD and other learning disabilities but require totally different treatments”.

Come to Bedford Middle School Wednesday night, March 30 and hear Dr. Rosenfeld give you permission to relax and enjoy your children, and still help them grow up to be happy, productive individuals. He is the author of *The Over-Scheduled Child* and creator of Family Night. For a preview of his philosophy, visit [www.hyperparenting.com](http://www.hyperparenting.com). Brought to you by the PTA Council

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## THE FIFTH ANNUAL WESTPORT LIBRARY RABBIT HILL FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE

### The Many Faces of Children's Literature

**March 31 through April 2**, award-winning authors and illustrators Linda Sue Park, Lisa Cline-Ransome, James E. Ransome, Pam Muñoz Ryan and Brian Selznick, along with Westporter author and illustrator Leonard Everett Fisher, will offer talks and workshops sponsored by Westport Public Library in Westport, Connecticut. Tours of Weston Woods and the Weston Woods Institute will also be held. The festival is for adults. However, some events are suitable for students 12 and over accompanied by an adult. See the website [www.rabbihillfestival.com](http://www.rabbihillfestival.com) for details and registration or phone Joan Hume at 203-291-4818.

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## Save The Date!

### Coleytown Company presents **Annie Get Your Gun**

The show that aims to please!

The Wild West comes to Coleytown Middle School

**April 7, 8 and 9**

Watch for details on ticket sales next month.



# BEDFORD CALENDAR

## FEBRUARY

4	PTA Executive Board meeting 8:45 AM
11	March Blast Deadline
11	HONK!
12	HONK!
13	HONK!
21-28	NO SCHOOL – Winter Recess

## MARCH

4	PTA Executive Board meeting 8:45 AM
10	General PTA Meeting, 9 AM
11	Student/Faculty Basketball Game
11	April Blast Deadline
15	Town-wide Band Festival, 8:00 PM, Staples
19	Minds In Motion, 12:30-4:30 PM
25	NO SCHOOL – Good Friday
30	PTA Meeting, 7:30 PM, Dr. Alvin Rosenfeld

# BLAST

BEDFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL PTA  
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WESTPORT, CT 06880

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