



Parents Learn About Non-Defensive Communication

CALENDAR

Late January

25th - Vision Screening for K and 2nd grades.

29th - No School Staff Development Day.

31st - Student Achievement Data Workshop Special Meeting of the BUSD Board. 7:30 p.m., 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

31st - Longfellow Middle School Open House 7 p.m.

February

2nd - Fuerza Latina 6-8 p.m. Library. (See p. 2)

6th - School Governance Council Meeting 6 p.m. Library.

9th - Middle School Preference Forms Due (see p. 2)

13th - PTA Meeting Dinner at 6:00 (cafetorium); meeting 6:30-8 (library).

16th - No School Lincoln's Birthday.

19th - No School President's Day Holiday

22nd - Black History Night 5:30-7:30 p.m. Cafetorium.

The January PTA meeting featured a wonderful presentation by Sharon Strand Ellison, founder of Powerful Non-Defensive Communication (PNDC). Her message is that we can remove the "power struggle" in our relationships (parent-child or any other relationship) simply by changing the way we communicate with each other. Some techniques:

- Asking non-defensive questions can avoid escalating an argument. Example: Rather than, "I'm tired of picking up your things!" try "When you say I am being unfair to ask you to help, do you say it because you are angry or because you think you should not have to help?"

- Questions can help break impasses. Child: "I can't do this homework!" Parent: (Instead of "Yes you can; just do it!") "It sounds like you are frustrated. Do you think a short break would help?"

- Kids can use the techniques on parents, too. Ellison presented a real example that her grandson used

with his mother, Ellison's daughter. Having repeatedly responded to her son's request for lunch by saying, "just a few more minutes," the son finally replied (instead of whining or throwing a fit), "Mom, should I believe you this time?"

- Consider your tone of voice. Non-defensive questions should not be delivered in a tone that makes an accusatory or judgmental statement. It helps when the tone of the sentence comes down in pitch to a place of rest at the end. A rise in pitch frequently gives the question a tone of intensity that can keep the listener from answering sincerely.

Ellison runs frequent workshops and practice sessions locally, with fees always on a sliding scale. Her calendar of events as well as complete information about her work with parents and children, as well as organizations, corporations and individuals, is available at: <http://pndc.com>.



Middle School Preference Forms Due

Parents may submit their preference for the middle school they wish their child to attend. Forms are due by February 9. Assignments will be mailed by March 9. For more information, call the BUSD Admissions Office at 644-6504.

PTA Coffee Hour Every Wednesday

If you have a few minutes to an hour on Wednesday mornings at 8:00, please join parents in casual conversation at the PTA's coffee hour, directly across from the office. Head Hostess: Kathy Stafford, PTA Vice Chair, with assistance from Allison Bryant.

Stay Connected, Electronically!

Get the latest news and announcements from Washington School by email -- sign up for Washington Talk! To join wTalk, send a blank email to: wTalk-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

You can keep up to date on all Washington School events and other information on our website: <http://washington.berkeleypta.org>.

Fire Drill!

The school will be running an Earthquake Drill on Jan 30th and a Fire Drill on February 8th.

Washington News Shorts

School Governance Council Elected

200 out of 300 families at Washington voted in our election for School Governance Council. The average number of votes per person was 30, with the highest number of votes being 89. The top seven winners got no less than 67 votes each.

Congratulations to our new Council, and to everyone who participated. We now have a diverse group of parents in leadership positions, with a diverse list of back-ups who have the option of acting as leaders for PTA or other groups.

The winners are: Suzanne Fuoco and Stuart Fox (1st, 3rd and 5th grades); Marina Hernandez (1st and 5th grades); Janet Guastavino (5th grade); Derek Spears (5th grade); Bill and Brenda Jackson (Kindergarten); Noelia Sarabia (Tamayo) (5th grade); and Chris Taylor (5th grade).

New Group for Latino Families at Washington: Fuerza Latina

En diciembre del 2006 nos juntamos las familias Latinas de Washington para hablar sobre los problemas y sugerencias en la educacion de nuestros hijos. La reunion fue un exito y de esto resultado el nombre de FUERZA LATINA. Asistieron 8 familias, ademas de la participacion de la Directora Rita Kimball y Ann Callegari la responsable del Programa despues de la escuela. Esperamos que mas familias se integren al grupo para fortalecer nuestro movimiento. La proxima reunion planificada sera para el 2 de febrero a las 6:00 de la tarde tendremos la participacion de Isabel Rodriguez Martinez, del Distrito Escolar quien nos dara una charla sobre "La Disciplina". Recuerden que los principales modelos en la educacion y desarrollo de los ninos somos los padres. Esperamos que puedan participar y juntos podamos salir adelante como una verdadera FUERZA LATINA.

Music Program Expanded to K-2!

The California Arts Council has approved a grant to fund weekly music classes taught by the Crowden Music Center for Kindergarten,

1st and 2nd graders at Washington School starting in February through the rest of the school year. This expands the current Crowden program for Washington 2nd-graders, which was featured in the November Acorn. Many thanks to Marion Atherton, a Washington School parent and the Director of the Crowden Center for Music in the Community, for applying for this grant last fall. The CAC grant requires a 1:1 match by the Crowden Music Center, and Marion is optimistic that she will find donors to provide the match.

Book News

Parent Jamie Greenblatt reports that we raised \$265 from our Cody's School Book Days receipts. This was 15% of the total pre-tax sales of \$1,765 (and there may be some Internet sales still coming in). (Promotional expenses were \$84.)

Many thanks to Jamie for organizing the fundraiser and to the many people who bought books for their home and/or their child's classroom. Librarian Suzy Mead would like to thank all those who donated books to the library: Margaret Norman, Sahoko Tamagawa, Nancy Rader, Jerry Garfield, and Rich Hemphill. Ms. Mead says, "I am excited and grateful for all this generosity. Kids love books!"

Ms. Mead would also like to thank Marlene Gonzalez (Kenyatta's mom), for doing a great job shelving every week. Ms. Mead can always use more volunteers, especially to help with the upcoming Scholastic Book Faire, which will take place at Washington on March 5-9.

Finally, Ms. Mead reports that Scholastic found a credit from 1998 (!), with which she ordered a set of books on 20 countries.

Washington's Black History Month to Feature Black Inventors

Join the African American Unity Group in celebrating Black History Month in February. The theme this year is "Black Inventors." The month will feature Monday morning assembly activities for students and culminate in the annual parent-sponsored Black History Program on

Please see p. 4

Kidz Club Update

By Ann Callegari, Kids Club Coordinator

The Kidz Club After-School Program is up and running for winter session and we'd like to give you an update on some changes that have taken place. (More details, including information on grade-level teachers and enrichment classes, went home in a letter with Kidz Club students. Please ask me for a copy if you did not get it.)

First of all, I would like to announce I will be assuming my role as Family Resource Coordinator for Washington, while continuing as the Coordinator for Kidz Club. My role at Washington has expanded, and I am now able to transition into my new position because we have hired our new Kidz Club Assistant Coordinator, Angela Price. What this means for Kidz Club is that I will work closely with Ms. Price, and she will work closely with our staff and your students after school. Please know that this is a positive change, as I will now have the privilege of working with our families during the school day as well as after school.

Angela Price has jumped right in and supported the operation as your 1st grade substitute teacher. She is a true leader who does what it takes to get the job done. I welcome her great attitude, take-charge style and kindness to our students and staff.

Ms. Price comes to us from Connecticut where she was the Director of The Multicultural Center, and Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions. She has developed partnership programs with New



Angela Price

York City public schools providing early outreach and college prep to many students. Ms. Price believes in empowering students with knowledge and support. This makes her an excellent fit for Kidz Club.

As Assistant Coordinator, Ms. Price is responsible for the daily operation of Kidz Club. This means that she will be available to answer your questions, support the staff, and to handle any situation that comes up. Please know that Ms. Price and I will communicate every day, and that our supportive relationship will only improve our Kidz Club Operation and the quality of our after school program. (You can reach us at 644-6939.)

Please join me in welcoming Ms. Angela Price to our Kidz Club Team!



The El Cerrito Ballet Center performed The Nutcracker at a special assembly in December, thanks to Joann Bautista, mother of Krystal Bautista who performed in the ballet. Joann would like to thank Barbara Gabriel, ECBC director, Principal Kimball and Ms. Geminder for helping to make the production possible at our school.

PTA After-School Classes Begin in February

The PTA is offering a great variety of after-school classes for winter session. A brochure with complete information will be sent home with kids by Friday, January 26. Brochures are also available at the information table across from the office. Forms and checks are due to the PTA box by Thursday, February 1st. Many thanks to Charlotte Worsley, Deborah Badhia, Abigail Surasky, Eli Cochran, Margaret Norman and Rita Kimball for organizing these classes! Contact Charlotte Worsley with any questions: 510-548-1820 or charworsley@yahoo.com.

PTA Now Selling Berkeley Bowl Scrip!

You can now buy Berkeley Bowl scrip with 4% going to the Washington PTA. Here's how it works: Berkeley Bowl sells scrip to the PTA at a 4% discount. PTA then sells the scrip at face value to Washington families who use it like cash at the Berkeley Bowl. So, when you shop at the Bowl using the scrip, 4% of your purchase will go to the Washington PTA at no extra cost to you. Margaret Norman, PTA treasurer, will have scrip available at the Wednesday coffee: bring your checkbooks and purchase scrip!

We are considering selling Peet's Coffee & Tea scrip. Let Margaret know if you are interested; before we buy, we want to be sure we can sell it all!

PTA Officers

Please contact any one of the officers if you have ideas, questions or concerns.

Abigail Surasky - President.
Phone: 649-9413, email:
acubabe_2000@yahoo.com

Kathy Stafford - Vice-President.
Phone: 510-848-7223

Sahoko Tamagawa - Secretary.
Phone: 848-0780, email: sahkot@yahoo.com

Margaret Norman - Treasurer.
Phone: 848-8338, email: margaretnorman@sbcglobal.net

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Rader, phone: 510-845-5077, email: nrader@igc.org. Ideas, information and articles for *The Acorn* are welcome!

We're on the Web! <http://washington.berkeleypta.org>

Washington Elementary

2300 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: 644-6310
Fax: 644-7718

Rita Kimball, Principal.
Email: rita_kimball@berkeley.k12.ca.us

Paula Shoemaker, Secretary.
Email: paula_shoemaker@berkeley.k12.ca.us

Kidz Club: 644-6939

Teacher Voice Mail: 644-4500, extension 21XXX replacing XXX with the number of the classroom.

BUSD

2134 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: 644-6348

Meet Ms.CR, 4th-Grade Teacher

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles profiling our new teachers. Leila Clark-Riddell is teaching 4th grade. Here Ms CR, as she is known in the classroom, tells us a little bit about herself.

When I tell my students about my childhood, they don't believe me. I grew up in a redwood forest in Mill Valley. I would walk home from school every day by hopping rock-to-rock up a creek, with no houses or people around. The part of my childhood that my students do NOT believe is my schooling: in 3rd and 4th grade, I literally do not remember ever doing any school work! As far as I can remember, we only played. It was the height of Marin in the 1970s - no structure whatsoever.

Miraculously, I managed to learn enough in this unstructured environment to get into U.C. Berkeley. College was the amazing, transformative, mind-opening experience that it is supposed to be. After college, I worked in restaurants and traveled, while I figured out what I wanted to do with my life. On one of my adventures, when I moved to Washington D.C. for a while, I met the man who would later become my husband, Bob Riddell.

I dragged Bob back to California, and ten months later left to go back East, to go to law school. After law school, Bob and I got married, had an amazing two-month honeymoon in East Africa, settled in Oakland (where I've lived ever since) and then got



to work. After I had my daughter, Julia, and my son, David (who are now 11 and 9 years old), I was able to work part-time as a civil rights lawyer.

But even though I believed in the civil rights' work I was doing, I never really liked being a lawyer; it was simply too adversarial. At the same time, I was able to volunteer a lot at my children's school, since I was working part-time. And I LOVED being in the classroom! So I went back to school to get my teaching credential.

Once again, I was blessed ... I was assigned a student teaching position in Hilary Mitchell's classroom. Not only did I have a wonderful learning experience from a master teacher, I was able to get my foot in the door of Washington School. And I literally cannot imagine a school in which I would rather work! I love my colleagues and boss, the families, and most of all, the CHILDREN!

Black History Month ...

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Thursday, February 22, 5:30-7:00 p.m. in the Washington Cafetorium. All students can participate in an art project contest by sculpting, painting, making dioramas or writing essays. And special t-shirts will be available for \$15 in youth and adult sizes (you can place your order at the Wednesday morning PTA coffee).

The evening event will feature a special Black Hero's presentation highlighting the ArtEsteem program now being offered as part of the after school enrichment programming. There will also be classroom presentations, awards for the winners of

the art contest (there will be winners in three grade groups: K-1, 2-3, and 4-5), and raffle prizes (everyone will get a raffle ticket upon entry), followed by a free soul food potluck dinner.

If you are interested in helping with these events, please attend the next meeting of the African American Unity Group in early February (date TBD), 5:45-7:30 p.m. in the Washington Library. Childcare and a potluck dinner will be provided. Watch for more information, or contact Mrs. Theresa Butler, Latina Simpkins or Kathy Stafford at 644-6939 or call Ruth Davis at 209-3302 for more information.