



EXPLORATIONS

Blue Hill Consolidated School

60 High Street • Blue Hill, Maine 04614

February 2, 2012

HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY!

As far as the groundhog goes, here is the official scoop from <http://www.groundhog.org> for what happens when the critter comes out of his hole.
If he sees his shadow, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. If the day is cloudy and, shadowless, he takes it as a sign of spring and stays above ground. Since we have yet to have much of a winter, I am undecided as to whether or not I want him to see his shadow. First time ever!

An Evening of Music and Food

The 8th grade is hosting a three-course dinner of your choice, baked stuffed haddock or boneless smoked ham, and an evening of talented local and 8th grade musicians on Saturday, February 4 in the BHCS café. There are two seatings at 5 PM and 7 PM. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased ahead for reservations or at the door. All proceeds benefit their 8th grade class trip. Call 374-2202, ext. 129.

Grade Five Science

As a final project for their science unit on **VERTEBRATES**, 5th graders got to see first hand the importance of a central backbone to a skeletal structure. They worked with found objects to turn trash into treasure and create a supportive vertebrate skeleton. They photographed their skeletons before adding skin, scales, feathers, or fur. Each vertebrate creation fits neatly into one of the five vertebrate classifications and is either exothermic or endothermic. Come check out our display in the lobby!

Handwriting Conference Report...

Last week I mentioned that I had attended (on John Hancock's birthday) a national conference on handwriting, and I promised a report for

everyone. It turns out that the report I wrote is five pages long, so I am posting the complete report on the website and will attach it to this week's e-Explorations. You can also get a paper copy in the office.

Handwriting in the 21st Century?

"Because the Common Core Standards allow each state to choose whether to include hand-generated communication in the curriculum, some educators are opting to teach only manuscript and keyboarding; a combination of manuscript, cursive, and keyboarding; or exclusively keyboarding. What impact will these decisions or non-decisions have on children learning to read and write? This is an educational summit...providing a much-needed forum for the most current research and some spirited discussion about this important question. The educational community needs to codify those elements of hand-generated communication that are crucial for students' academic success and make them easier for curriculum administrators to integrate into the Common Core." (*from the event program*)

That gives you the gist of what the conference was about. My statements in the report are taken from the 18 pages of notes I wrote (by hand, and in cursive) during the summit. Some notes may be verbatim comments from presenters; others are my inferences (which, according to one researcher, is an essential process in note taking). This is how my report on the summit begins, the rest is available on line and in the office:

Nationally, a lack of consistency in teaching handwriting has become acceptable without serious attention being given to it, but today we have a better understanding of the role of handwriting. The Whole Language Movement, by limiting direct instruction of handwriting, spelling, and grammar, may have, in hindsight, done a disservice to those children who were expected to holistically acquire proficiency in

writing and reading. Some students became proficient, but many others did not. The young adults emerging into today's workforce may not have experienced the teaching of all the elements that impact literacy (spelling, grammar, mechanics, handwriting, reading and writing), and some are seriously struggling to learn them now.

Both Steve Graham, Ed.D. a researcher at Vanderbilt University and Daniel A. Domenech, Ph.D. and the Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators (representing America's school superintendents) say that it is a MYTH that because of technology we will not need to write by hand anymore. Dr. Domenech also used the idiomatic expression, "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." Technology has tempted us to do this. Indeed, technology is here, but there is not yet the need or the urgency to switch everything to technology. He quipped that 50 years from now, things may be different, but for now we need to instruct children in handwriting and spelling. According to him, we still need to memorize the times tables and learn cursive writing. Cursive should still be part of the comprehensive educational program. We need to know these things because we are humans and because the process of learning these skills impacts the learning capacity of the brain. And in the lives of humans, things happen that will require us to use our human minds.

In the complete report you will find some very interesting research facts and opinions by the presenters. ~*Della Martin*

PTF

*Family Movie Night: this Friday, Feb. 3. And the movie (by popular vote) is... *Mr. Popper's Penguins!*

There will be pizza and hot dogs for sale starting at 5:30, along with other snacks and water, and the movie will start at 6. Just a reminder that all students should be with an adult. There is no charge for the movie, but there is a donation jar at the door to help pay for the movie performance license purchased annually by the PTF. Popcorn is free, and snack donations

would be welcomed!

*The next PTF meeting is next Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 6 PM in the library. Hope to see you there.

Library

*Stop by to see the inviting book displays created by the students in the 7-8 Book Club, and pick up some great reading suggestions.

Girl Scouts

All girls in grades 2 & 3 who are interested in Girl Scouts should meet next Tuesday, Feb 7, after school until 4:00 PM. If you can't make it call Rena at 374-9930.

Pee Wee Basketball

Sedgwick @ Blue Hill - 10 AM to Noon, GSA Gym

BREAKFAST

Saturday, February 18, 7:00 AM - 9:30 AM at the Brooksville Elementary School

Eggs to order, home fries, pancakes, bacon, sausage, baked beans, fruit salad, home baked pastries, juice, and coffee!

To benefit their neighbor, Sedgwick Elementary School's Student Activities Fund
\$6 per person; \$15 per family
For more info contact Brooksville Elementary School at 326-8500 or nadalepper@gmail.com.

Score Clock Lights Needed If you happen to have some of the old Christmas lights (about 2" long) that were used in the 50's and 60's, we need some to replace the orange and red ones of the old sports clock. Franklin Burke has more info, if you think you might have some to share.

Dates to Remember

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| Fri., Feb. 3 | Family Movie Night, food sales at 5:30 ; movie starts at 6 PM. |
| Sat., Feb. 4 | 8 th Grade Dinner and Music Night, 5 PM and 7 PM seatings |
| Tues., Feb. 7 | PTF meeting will be at 6 PM in library. |
| Wed., Feb. 8 | School Board meeting, 5 PM in library. |
| Fri., Mar. 2 | BEAR Night (Be Enthusiastic About Reading!) More info coming! |