Dear Parents:

Hopefully, many of you have had an opportunity to read my summation of our work to date regarding the Portrait of a Graduate (POAG) in the November 16th Panther Press. At Spring Hill, one of our major thrusts in the coming years will be a steady progression towards Project Based Learning (PBL) for all children. Research, heavily studied and reported over many years, indicates that students who have been taught to integrate key concepts in a project based environment have a deeper understanding of the main facets of the subject matter. Specifically, our teachers at SHES also feel that teaching material in a more integrated way, couched in a PBL format, will pay dividends in the long run with students possessing a deeper understanding of the important aspects of the curriculum.

Recently, I came across an article in the Middle School Journal “Project-Based Learning Engages Students in Meaningful Work” by Heather Lattimer and Robert Riordan, November 2011 (Vol. 43, #2, p. 18-23), suggesting that the key components of a successful PBL classroom have the following ingredients: Academic Rigor, Authenticity, Applied Learning, Active Exploration, Adult Connections and Assessment. I would like to call them the 6 A’s of Project Based Learning.

- **Academic rigor** – Projects address key learning concepts that are included in the standards, benchmarks and indicators of the curriculum. Academic rigor assists students in developing the habits of mind and work associated to be successful later in life in various academic and professional disciplines. At SHES we endeavor to teach to the highest levels possible to stretch all students to exceed previous successes.

- **Authenticity** – Projects use a real-world context and address issues that matter to students. At SHES we do our best to make assignments meaningful and have application beyond the doors of our school.

- **Applied learning** – Projects engage students in solving semi-structured problems calling for competencies expected in high-performance work organizations, including teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. Working in small teams is a great strength of our SHES classrooms. Learning to share ideas and tap into special talents is nurtured.
• **Active exploration** – Projects extend beyond the classroom and connect to work internships, field based investigations, and community exploration. We wish we could do more of this type of activity. Our field trips and adults we bring into school do, in a small way, approximate this but we hope to do more of this in the near future.

• **Adult connections** – Projects connect students with adult mentors and coaches from the wider community. This has not been a focus to date other than previously mentioned field trips and bringing in experts on an occasional basis.

• **Assessment practices** – Projects involve students in regular exhibitions and assessments of their work in light of personal, school, and real-world standards of performance. Our SHES staff is already quite proficient in alternative assessment practices. We realized as a school community years ago that fill in the blank and circle the right answer type assessments are not the end all to understanding how well students perform or demonstrate their abilities.

One of the overarching goals of our staff in the coming years is to continue to gain valuable insights and training in the area of PBL. Hopefully, you will see your child(ren) involved in greater PBL type activities in the very near future.

Best regards,

_Roger Vanderhye_

Roger Vanderhye, Principal

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The 2015 National Geographic School Bee is Coming!

Do you know the largest country in Africa? The least populous US state? The colors on Italy’s national flag? Some Spring Hill students do and they will get to show off their knowledge about all things geographical in our upcoming bee. Representatives from each 4th, 5th, and 6th grade class will be competing in the annual Spring Hill Geography Bee in late January. Preliminary competitions to decide the representative for each class will be taking place over the next few weeks in each homeroom. Please see the attached flier for information about how your child can study and prepare for the bee (or just answer some questions for fun). Additional information, including the exact date and time of the school-level bee will be provided in a future edition of the Panther Press.

See pg 5 for flyer
See Inside this Issue:

**Page 1-2:** Principal Letter, Winter Break, Level 4 AAP @ Cooper MS
**Page 2:** Geography Bee
**Page 3:** Calendar, Kiss & Ride , Transportation Changes Procedure
**Page 4:** Inclement Weather Information
**Page 5:** Geography Bee Flyer
**Page 6-7:** PTO News

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**Kiss and Ride During Inclement Weather**

Many students who normally ride the bus or walk, are driven to school when it is raining or snowing. This causes a very long delay with kiss and ride. Please be patient as our staff is working as quickly as possible to accommodate all of the students. If students are late due to kiss and ride they are counted as tardy. As always the best option for getting children to and from school is the school bus. Thank you all for your patience and support.

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**Important Reminder: Transportation Changes Procedure**

This is a reminder that any changes to your child’s normal mode of transportation home must be sent to the office in writing, either by the transportation change request form, or by fax, no later than 2 pm.

Emails or last minute phone calls will not be accepted.

We want to reiterate the policy Spring Hill has in place is for your child’s safety.

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**Calendar**

Please schedule your family vacations during FCPS designated holidays / breaks, which you can see at this link: [http://www.fcps.edu/cal.shtml](http://www.fcps.edu/cal.shtml) Be aware that missing school for extended periods of time negatively impacts your child and your child's teacher.

**Week of December 1:**

- **Thursday, December 4:** 6th GR FR (Burns, Ginsberg & Papathanassiou), American Art Museum, 9:45-11:35
- **Friday, December 5:** Fun Fair Planning Meeting, Cafeteria, 9:00-10:15 am
- **Wednesday, December 7:** 6th GR FT (Smith, Seagraves & Minutoli), American Art Museum, 9:45-11:35 am

**Week of December 8:**

- **Friday, December 12:** 4th GR Colonial Day, Lg Pod (All Day), Cafeteria (1:30-3 pm)

**Week of December 15:**

- **Monday, December 12:** 1st GR Gingerbread House making, Lg Pod/Wet & Dry
- **Thursday, December 18:** SCA Spirit Day, PJ / Holiday Day
- **Friday, December 19:** Staff holiday sing-a-long, Cafeteria, 8-8:40 am
  - 2 hr Early Release

**Winter Break: December 22-January 2**

**Full 2014-2015 calendar:** click here: [http://www.fcps.edu/about14-15cal.shtml](http://www.fcps.edu/about14-15cal.shtml)

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**Thank you!**

We want to thank everyone for your patience and understanding with Kiss & Ride and the permanent closure of the entrance to the school at the stop light during arrival and dismissal.
Are You Prepared? Make Plans Now!

Inclement Weather and Emergency Closing Plans
Make Arrangements Now in Case of an Unforeseen Schedule Change

Due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, it may be necessary to close schools for the entire day, to open schools two hours late, or to close two hours early. The procedures used in school closings are detailed below. Keep this information in a convenient location for future reference.

Parents are urged to make arrangements now for the care of their children when schedule changes are made (and to provide for the rare situation when it is necessary to close an individual school because of a power failure or other circumstances). Children should know where to go or what to do if a parent will not be or is not home.

FCPS has several schedules set up to deal with inclement weather. These are put into effect when conditions threaten the safety of children and FCPS staff who are walking, driving, or riding buses to schools. These schedules are:

(1) Keep schools closed. (2) Open two hours late. (3) Close two hours early.

As soon as a decision is made to implement one of these changes, we post the information on:

- FCPS cable Channel 21
- www.fcps.edu.
- Facebook and Twitter.
- Email notifications will be made through our Keep in Touch (KIT) system.
- Called in to local radio and television stations.

We try to make a decision by 4:30 a.m. when schools will be closed all day or will open two hours late. This gives us 30 minutes so that the public announcement can be posted and reach all media outlets by 5:00 a.m. On some occasions, it is not possible to make these time frames as weather can change unexpectedly. On some other occasions, the school system has been able to make a scheduling decision the day before so that parents, staff members, and students know what will happen the following day. This usually happens when precipitation is already on the ground and the temperatures are such that the precipitation on the ground is frozen or will refreeze.

For more information, go to http://www.fcps.edu/news/weather.shtml
BEE PREPARED FOR THE GEO BEE!

ARE YOU A GEO-GENIUS?

1. Which state is known as the Peach State because peaches are one of its major crops—Hawaii or Georgia?
2. Which state is known as the Great Lakes State because it is bordered by four of the five Great Lakes—North Dakota or Michigan?
3. Which state, famous for its wealth and financial resources, is known as the Empire State—Idaho or New York?
4. A trumpet appears on the quarter of which state, known for its jazz music heritage—Louisiana or Pennsylvania?
5. The first successful airplane flight, at Kill Devil Hills, is commemorated on the quarter of which state—North Carolina or Iowa?
6. To walk in Lisbon’s Alfama district and to stay at a beach resort in the Algarve [al-GAHR-vee], you would travel to what country?
7. To bike around Stanley Park in Vancouver and see the northern lights near Yellowknife, you would travel to what country?
8. To take a rain forest tour and to dance at Rio de Janeiro’s Carnival celebration, you would travel to what country?
9. To see an acrobatics show in Beijing and walk along the Great Wall, you would travel to what country?
10. The threatened Canada lynx, which has large feet adapted for walking on top of deep snow, lives near Lake of the Woods in which state—Georgia or Minnesota?

KEEP QUIZZING ONLINE:
www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/quiz/today

STUDY ON THE GO!
Download the Geo Bee Challenge app at www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/apps.
Check out these National Geographic books available for purchase online at www.shopng.com/geobee.
**Green Initiatives Yogurt Container Drive**

Do you love yogurt and tend to buy them in the large containers?? Then we need your help!! The Green Initiatives Committee is seeking the collection of LARGE yogurt containers (32oz/2lb) to hold used up pens/mechanical pencils and glue sticks. We have received approval from Terracycle to turn these otherwise landfill-doomed items into $$ CASH $$ for our school! Our goal is to have at least two yogurt containers per classroom to hold each of these items. Containers can be turned in (clean, of course) to a designated box in the Cafeteria. Questions? Please contact Yashi Verma (a_vegemite@yahoo.com), Nancy Bao (nihao100@hotmail.com) or Kristin Mears (kamears@hotmail.co.uk).

**Staff Chili Lunch**

The Staff Appreciation committee is hosting the annual Staff Chili Lunch on Wednesday December 10th! This is one of our most popular events of the year and we need your help. We would appreciate donations of chili in crockpots and side dishes. If you’re not a cook, we are also in need of paper goods, raffle donations or help for set up or clean up. You can contact Lynne at evangelineemanuel1014@gmail.com or Maile at maileramzi@me.com if you would like to help. You can also sign up directly at [http://www.SignUpGenius.com/go/806054DAAAA22A31-chili/5557039](http://www.SignUpGenius.com/go/806054DAAAA22A31-chili/5557039).

**Thank You!**

Each week there are so many volunteers that take time to make our school a little better. Many thanks to:

Jennifer Tam and Rania Razek for doing Bus Notes last Friday.

All the parents who helped with Thanksgiving celebrations for their classes!

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**First Organizational Fun Fair Meeting:** December 5th at 9:15 a.m. in the cafeteria. Committee chairs are requested to attend, all others are invited.

**Chili Lunch for Staff:** December 10th. Use the Sign Up Genius link above to help.

**Early Dismissal** on December 19th for Winter Break.

**December 19th – NO BUS NOTES.** All after school play dates cancelled due to early release.
Let’s start planning some FUN FAIR fun!

Spring Hill’s Fun Fair Planning Meeting

Friday, December 5, 2014

9:15 -10:15 am in the School Cafeteria

Everyone is welcome to join!

Our Fun Fair will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2015 from 10am to 3pm. It is truly a day filled with FUN for the kids and the community. We need your help to make that all happen!!! Get involved now and let’s start planning.

Mark your calendars and come join us in the cafeteria on Friday, December 5 at 9:15 am to start the preparations for this year’s Fun Fair. We will be discussing some new ideas, themes, t-shirt designs and more.

If you have not been able to find the right volunteer sport, this is a great event to get involved with. There are small jobs, large jobs, jobs that can be done from home and/or jobs just the day of the Fun Fair only. There’s something for everyone and it is truly a fun way to meet new people and become involved in the school.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sue Cardenas, suecard@me.com or 571-436-1819.