

Bethlehem Elementary School

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"Creating a Community of Lifelong Learners"

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July 25, 2016

Dear Parents and Students,

Summer greetings! I hope this letter finds you in good spirits, healthy, and rested! Hopefully, you have had an opportunity to vacation or participate in some relaxing activities during the past several weeks. It's hard to believe how quickly the weeks have passed! Not surprisingly, it seems our summer vacation began only a few days ago. However, I am optimistic the past weeks have given your family the opportunity to mentally and physically gear up for another busy year at Bethlehem Elementary School.

The purpose of this summer correspondence is to make you aware of some of the most recent happenings and upcoming events at the school. As you might imagine, the summer break has been a relatively busy one thus far with scheduling, planning, and preparing for the upcoming school year. It has been busy, but has also been very quiet without our students and staff in the building. We have also been fortunate to have a fresh coat of paint applied on our interior hallway walls. What a difference the painting has made! It looks like the sunshine has been moved inside.

Our projected enrollment numbers indicate we will have a total of about 460 students as we begin the new school year. The total enrollment number changes almost weekly as new students enroll and other students leave our school. With that in mind, the decrease in student enrollment from last year has resulted in the loss of one teaching position. We will also lose the teacher assistant position that was filled by Mrs. Vickie Markham.

Retirements of Mrs. Jill Hooks, Mrs. Dawn Yount, Mrs. Kim Deitz, and the resignation of Mrs. Terra Beck have left some big shoes to fill. We welcome three new staff members to our BES family. Samantha Feimster recently taught at North Newton Elementary and will be teaching 4th grade at BES this year. Chassidy Rowe taught at Taylorsville Elementary last year and will be teaching 5th grade, and Emily Schwandt, also coming to us from Taylorsville Elementary, will be teaching Kindergarten. We are very blessed to add these professionals to our team and I am very eager to see all of the great learning opportunities they will bring to our BES students.

I met with the current PTO Executive Board on July 19th to discuss fundraising activities that will enhance the educational program for the 2016-2017 school year. Thanks again for your efforts and the wonderful opportunities students and staff experienced last year due to your hard work. In an effort to keep the lines of communication open between school and home, I

feel very strongly that parents should see the fruits of their labors. In an effort to do so, I will be including a list of the 2015-2016 PTO expenditures in an upcoming parent newsletter. During the PTO Board meeting, we developed a proposed budget for the 2016-2017 school year. Despite continued tough economic times, we will work together to ensure exceptional programs and resources remain in place at Bethlehem Elementary School. I look forward to another successful year with our Parent/Teacher Organization.

Please save the date and make plans to attend our annual Open House. It has been scheduled for Thursday, August 25th from 4:30-6:30 p.m. During the Open House time period, students and parents will have the opportunity to visit classrooms, meet teachers and support staff, and check bus information/schedules prior to the students' first day on **Monday, August 29th**. In the event you need to obtain bus information, several of the bus drivers will be in the cafeteria to answer your questions. A bus change request may be made at Open House, but cannot be processed before Tuesday, September 6th. If you need before and/or after school care services, you should plan to sign up for these programs in the After School Care Building that evening. Even if your child was enrolled in the BASC program during the 2015-2016 school year, you must verify your enrollment on Open House evening for the upcoming school year by meeting with BASC staff. During our Open House, teachers will be sharing classroom and/or grade level specific information. There will also be a time set for meeting and greeting students and parents. We will meet based on the following schedule. Students assigned to 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade and their parents are invited to meet the teachers and visit the 3-5 classrooms from 4:30-5:00. Then, from 5:10-5:50 students and parents in all grades K-5 will meet in individual classrooms to obtain information specific to individual classes and ask specific grade level or classroom questions. Finally, from 6:00-6:30, Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students and their parents are invited to meet K-2 teachers and visit classrooms. Being a parent of three myself, I realize it is impossible to be in more than one place at a time. Therefore, families with students in more than one grade or class will need to recruit the help of other family members or neighbors in order to collaborate and share written information from specific teachers during the 5:10-5:50 class/grade level meeting times. Hopefully, this format will allow parents an opportunity to visit classrooms with their child(ren) before the first day of school, and will provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions during the informative class specific time from 5:10-5:50. This will also allow the teachers to focus on welcoming students during the meet and greet times instead of getting caught with a limited number of families answering questions. Your questions are very important and our teachers want to provide you with as clear a picture of the next grade level as possible. However, they want to meet each student and parent and they also want to set a good first impression for students by welcoming each individual student to their classroom during the meet and greet time assigned to their grade span. If you have a need to speak with your child's teacher regarding specific personal information, please contact the teacher to set up a time other than the time set aside for Open House.

School hours have been changed slightly this year in an effort to meet time mandates set forth by the state of North Carolina. The new student hours are: **7:55- Warning Bell** (All students in the hallway or at breakfast should proceed to their assigned classrooms.)

8:00-Tardy Bell (Students entering the building after this bell will report to the office to receive a tardy slip before being admitted to class. Parents should accompany students into the office to help their child obtain a tardy slip.) Students who would like to take advantage of the **free breakfast** being offered each morning should **arrive no later than 7:50** in order to have time to eat and arrive to class before the tardy bell. Parents or guardians who have a need to walk in with a child any morning will need to first sign in through the school office in

order to obtain a visitor pass. **Parents will not be permitted to walk students to class after the 7:55 Warning Bell.** If you plan to walk your child to class for the first few days, you will need to be signed in at the office by 7:55. Our sign-in/identification scanner requires that visitors into our school building present a Driver's License or state photo ID to be scanned in order to obtain a pass. **We encourage you to allow your child the privilege of building independence by allowing him/her to walk in to the school on their own each morning.** This also helps us to keep safety as a priority by decreasing the number of persons walking through the car rider line, cuts down on the number of tardies issued each day, and also eases the transition for students who may be having difficulty separating from adults. **3:10 - Student Dismissal Bell** (Adults waiting in the car line to pick students up **should not enter the car line waiting lanes in the school parking area prior to 3:10 bell. We must keep our Fire Lanes open. Student dismissal will not be permitted between the times of 3:00 and 3:20 unless the student has a doctor or dental appointment. This allows our entire staff to limit distractions in an effort to make certain students are dismissed safely.**

Kindergarten assignment letters, along with an explanation about the staggered enrollment, will be mailed on Thursday, August 11th. Assignment letters for other grades will be mailed to students and parents on Monday, August 22nd. A copy of the school calendar and grade level supply lists can be found on our school website by visiting our school page through the Alexander County Schools Home Page. www.alexander.k12.nc.us Parents will also receive a copy of the calendar in the Student Handbook folder on the first day of school. A suggested supply list has been posted on our school website, and at the Dollar General, Lowe's Foods, and Fred's in the Bethlehem community, Wal-Mart in Taylorsville, and Target in Hickory. If you do not have internet access and are unable to access the list, please call the school office to make arrangements for us to provide a hard copy for your use. Supply lists for the upcoming school year were also included in the 2015-2016 final report cards. Hopefully, making these lists available early helped as you started preparing for the new school year. Teachers may include additional requests specific to their classroom at the time assignment letters are mailed; nevertheless, this will help you get a head start on making "back to school" preparations.

In an effort to be proactive, I want to provide the following reminders in order to help get school started on the "right foot" again this school year:

- Students will participate in PE or recess each day. In order to safely meet this physical expectation, your child(ren) will need to wear appropriate shoes each day. Flip flops, sandals, clogs, dress shoes, boots, shoes with heels, etc. will not be appropriate for recess/PE. **Students should wear or bring tennis shoes for these daily activities.**
- If your child wants to invite children from his/her classroom to a party (i.e. birthday, sleepover, etc.), please make sure all students receive an invitation if the invitations are being delivered at school. In the event the entire class is not being invited, please mail the invitation(s) or call those children in order to avoid hurt feelings.
- Lunch prices have changed for the upcoming school year. A child's lunch will cost \$2.55. Extra milk will be priced at 50 cents. All students in grades K-5 will be offered free breakfast in our cafeteria this school year. Breakfast will be served each day beginning at 7:30 a.m. Adult breakfast and lunch prices will be determined from an a la carte pricing list that will be posted in the cafeteria.
- The school day officially begins for students at 8:00 a.m. and students are dismissed at 3:10 p.m. Students should not be dropped off before the doors are opened for students at 7:30, nor should students or parents line up on the front sidewalk for entry into the building prior to

7:30. In order for staff members to arrive and park safely by 7:30 a.m., we ask that you do not block the entry for the upper parking lot or the left merge lane in the parking area prior to 7:30. As far as afternoon pickup, cars should not enter the parking lot to line up for student pick-up before 3:10 p.m. One of the car pick up lanes also serves as a Fire Lane and should not be blocked with parked cars. Since parking in the fire lane is a traffic violation, the fire marshal will only allow parking in this area for a short period of time. Cars lining up for student pick up are encouraged to approach the school from the west on Bethlehem School Road in order to keep the lanes on Highway 127 from being blocked and delaying our school buses from exiting the parking area.

- In an effort to keep safety as a top priority, students will not be signed out in the office between 3:00-3:20 p.m., unless they have an appointment. This safety measure allows for less confusion at dismissal and allows office staff to be available in the event a child or staff member has a question about afternoon transportation.

In closing, I am very excited about the upcoming school year. I am excited to hear the summer stories your child(ren) will share and I am especially excited about all the learning potential that will enter the building on Monday, August 29th. Please note that students will be dismissed at 3:10 p.m. that day. Two car signs will be supplied to every family at Open House Meet & Greet on Thursday, August 25th. If you cannot attend the Open House, your child will bring these signs home in his/her school packet on August 29th. (If you do not receive this information at Open House, you will need to make a car sign for the **first day**.) Hand-made car signs will only be accepted on August 29th. All parents/grandparents are expected to use the sign provided by the school after the first day. We will use the same policy that we used last year pertaining to afternoon car pick up. If you do not have the sign provided by the school, you will be asked to park and enter the school office in order to sign your child out for the day. If you need additional signs or if you have an emergency and a different person has to pick up your child, please call the school office. This will prevent confusion and frustration for the individual picking up your child. If you have any additional questions about the upcoming school year or events, please feel free to call the school office during the summer hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Again, I look forward to seeing you and your family soon!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jill Peek, Principal

SAVE the DATES

BES Open House
Thursday, August 25, 2016
4:30-6:30

BES Fall Festival
Saturday, October 8, 2016
4:30-8:30