



February 10, 2004

# The Aldrin Buzz

News from the Buzz Aldrin PTA

## Dance, Eat and Win Prizes at the Spring Fling

**T**ired of ice and snow? Come out and boogie February 27 at Aldrin's Spring Fling family night. We'll kick up the heat — and swivel our hula hoops — and have a rocking good time. Grab some pizza at 6:00pm and then dance until 8:30 with music provided by a Miles Steibel Entertainment DJ. Buy raffle tickets to try to win class projects that will be on display, and take part in the silent auction of teacher outings. There will also be a drawing for packets of gift certificates sponsored by the *It's Time to Read* program.



All of these are made/decorated by your children. As a special feature, the sixth graders are raffling a super-secret electronics gizmo that's sure to be a hit.

### Silent Auctions of Popular Teacher Outings

The silent auction promises to be a nail-biter, too. Each year, our teachers donate special events where they take small groups of kids to the zoo or a museum, host a tea party. These events are always super-popular with Aldrin families and are sure to inspire some vigorous bidding.

Tickets for the dance are \$3.00 at the door, and pizza and soda will also be sold by the PTA. Save room for dessert — the 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be sponsoring a great bake sale! Raffle tickets will be available in advance or at the event. Watch for a flyer about this awesome event in your child's Tuesday Recorder and mark the date on your calendar!

### Raffle Prizes Galore

What's up for grabs at the raffle? How about an Aldrin version of the Monopoly board game? There's also a collection of birdhouses, a CD tower, a craft cart with craft supplies, bins of fun items to help keep your children entertained on all these snow and ice days and a whole lot more!

**Important Schedule Changes**

**School will be open on February 16 (with a regular Monday schedule) and April 2** to make up for unscheduled school closures caused by weather. (February 16 was originally designated as a holiday and April 2, a teacher workday.)

Please be sure to update your home calendars!

**Fundraiser Tops \$10,000**

As of our February 6 deadline, 115 Aldrin families had contributed \$10,875 to our *It's A Family Affair* fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who donated.

If you would still like to help out, send us your donation and we will happily put it to good use.

## Reading Incentive Program Off to Strong Start!

**A**re you making time to read? The results from Week #1 of the *It's Time to Read* Program are in and already 20% of Aldrin students (more than 130 children) have received a prize from the grab-bag for completing 10 reading segments. But the rewards didn't stop there last week . . . almost 75 students went to the grab-bag twice for completing 20 segments and about 50 students went there three times for completing 30 segments. Amazingly, eight students have read enough to receive a certificate allowing them to pick a paperback book of choice and three of these students have already earned lottery tickets!



### First Grade Leads for Participation

You might be wondering how each grade is doing — let's hear it for the first grade! Already, almost 40% of our first-graders have received a prize. They are leading the school

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**Buzz Aldrin Elementary School**  
11375 Center Harbor Rd.  
Reston, VA 20194  
703.904.3800

[www.fcps.k12.va.us/AldrinES/](http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/AldrinES/)

### New FCPS Hotline 1.800.839.3277

A new telephone hotline for emergency messages in English, Korean and Spanish is now available.

You can call the number above toll-free from anywhere in the region to get information on school delays, closings and other emergency messages.

The new number will allow many more callers to use the system at one time.

As always, you can also get updates from the FCPS web site at [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu) and by email when you sign up for the *Keep In Touch* service on the same site.



### Presidents' Note

It's a busy, exciting month for our school. The Winter After-School Activities Program has begun, and the Odyssey of the Mind teams are busy creating and preparing for the March 6<sup>th</sup> competition at Mt. Vernon High School. (Thank you to the teachers and parents who have volunteered time to this program).

#### *It's Time to Read* Program Going Gang-Busters

Our Reading Incentive Program is ongoing, encouraging children to read, read, read! Thank you, **Mr. Marinoff, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Dulong, Mrs. Gouldey, Mrs. Kern, Mrs. Morris, Mr. O'Day, Mrs. Crittenden** (dressed as Strega Nona and equipped with her own pot of pasta!), **Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Hardesty** and **Ms. Keyser** for reading books at Barnes & Noble . . . and all of you who came to listen and support the fundraiser by buying books. We raised more than \$430 which will be used to defray the costs of this program.

#### Special Events Coming Up

We are looking forward to our first assembly of the year. The Franklin Institute will give a science presentation on February 12<sup>th</sup>. We hope this show will encourage participation in the Aldrin Science Fair on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Thank you, **Sally Cors**, for organizing this assembly.

Our Family Fun Dance and Raffle is also scheduled for this month. (See the front-page article for details.) Please mark your calendar for February 27 for — it's going to be fun for the whole family. We even have a few surprise silent auction items. Come join the excitement!

All of these wonderful events and programs would not be possible without PTA funding. Our Direct Contribution Campaign officially ended last week, but we welcome any checks that didn't make it into school with last week's crazy schedule. Please consider making a donation so that your child will continue to have an enriching experience at Aldrin.

#### PTA-sponsored Meetings

At press-time, our February PTA meeting was scheduled to feature 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher **Mr. Gary Cole**, speaking about how language arts is taught at Aldrin. We greatly appreciate Mr. Cole taking time to share information with us. **Mrs. Donna Rich**, from Fairfax County Special Education, was also scheduled to give information regarding services offered by the County. The next PTA meeting is scheduled for March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00. These meetings always provide information about what is going on in our school as well as current events in Fairfax County. Please come and become an informed school participant.

Mr. Marinoff and Mrs. Miller speak at the PTA meetings, but there is limited time for questions. At Mr. Marinoff's request, the PTA initiated the bi-monthly Town Hall meetings. The next meeting is February 25 at 7:00. Come with your questions to this open forum. (Anonymous questions can be submitted at the meeting.)

#### Welcome Home, Christa

We would like to express our joy and gratitude for the safe return of Christa Rogaliner. Thank you, everyone, for making posters and flyers, distributing information, making phone calls, attending meetings, and more. It is reassuring to know we live in a supportive, loving community willing to make personal sacrifices to help in a moments' notice. Thanks for giving and caring!

*Ann and Beth*



### A Sweet Surprise

Aldrin's SCA created dozens of hand-made Valentine cards earlier this month. They'll be delivered, along with a basket of treats, by the Herndon High Keyette Club to the Fellowship House in Reston.



*The Aldrin Buzz is published monthly during the school year to provide parents with school and PTA news.*

*If you have comments or suggestions, contact the editor, Elaine Kelly, at [elainekelly@comcast.net](mailto:elainekelly@comcast.net).*

## Getting Through Homework With Less Pain

**F**or most children, re-adjusting to having homework is a bit of a struggle at the beginning of the year. By now, most of the woes (and whining) should be in the past.

If your child is still having trouble completing homework without a lot of policing on your part, these tips might help.

1. The best time to do homework varies with each child. Some might need a break right after school. Others should get right at it — before the distractions set in.
2. Be consistent about when homework must be completed. Routine is important.
3. Create a study area where homework is done. It can be anything from the kitchen table to your child's room. It should just be free from distractions, and there should be no TV nearby!
4. Make a homework box where your child can leave pens, pencils, an eraser, a ruler — anything she might need to complete homework. Be sure everything goes back!
5. Provide guidance, support and praise, but not answers.
6. Load homework into the backpack the night before. Homework left at home doesn't do much good!
7. If despite best efforts, homework continues to cause real difficulties, contact your child's teacher. Together, you can work to find strategies that are best for your child.



## Are Our Kids Getting Too Much Homework?

The media tells us that our kids are overscheduled and buried in homework.

And there are probably days when your children are complaining about their homework load, too.

Yet the Brown Center Report on American Education reports that from 1981 to 1997, **weekly** time devoted to studying increased only 23 minutes.

That's based on a respected University of Michigan study that looked at how children spend their time.

It shows that children aged 6-8 spent just over 2 hours **per week** studying in 1997, while older children (aged 9-12) spent close to 3.75 hours.

So, what is the right amount of homework?

Fairfax County Public Schools says that, on average, **daily** homework shouldn't exceed one half-hour at the primary level (up to third grade) and one hour at the upper elementary level.

That's in keeping with the study's averages and well in line with National PTA recommendations. Their experts recommend no more than 10-20 minutes daily for K-2 students and 30-60 minutes for 3rd to 6th graders.

Of course, if your child's daily homework is consistent with these guidelines and he still complains, you could always just tell him about what it was like when **you** were a kid!

## Fun at Home: Experiment with Candy & Air on the Move

**D**id you know that particles from dust storms in the Sahara Desert in Africa can actually end up right here? It's true!

Air is constantly moving from one place to another. Sometimes we can tell it's moving (when we watch clouds change shape, for example), sometimes we cannot.

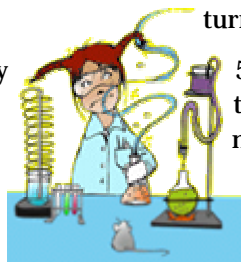
To see this movement in action, try this experiment.

### What You Need

- Square plastic container
- Warm (not hot) tap water
- Candies with hard, colored shells (like Skittles)

### What You Do

1. Partially fill the plastic container with warm water to a little less than one inch deep.
2. Select three pieces each of four different colors of candy (3 red, 3 yellow, 3 blue, and 3 green for example).
3. Separate the candies by color. Put the candies into the water-filled container



so that each corner has a different color. **Don't stir the water!**

4. Watch carefully as the candies begin to dissolve. The colors should start to move and blend. Record the results or draw a picture of how your experiment turned out.
5. Try it again! Clean your container and hands and try the experiment again with new candies. Did the colors blend differently? Record your results!

### Why This Matters

Scientists track clouds, dust, smoke and gases in the same way. Using satellite photos, they can tell how fast and which way the wind is blowing. By tracking air speed and direction, weather forecasters can warn us of storms so we can take cover!

*Source: Celebrating Chemistry, an American Chemical Society publication. Visit the American Chemical Society on the web at [www.chemistry.org/wondernet](http://www.chemistry.org/wondernet) for more information and ideas!*

## What Are All These Tests For?

**CogAT**—Cognitive Abilities Test, one measure used in determining placement for Gifted & Talented programs. Used along with achievement tests to determine if the student is working up to abilities.

**SOL**—Standards of Learning, tests that determine student learning and achievement in relation to standards set for Virginia public schools. Used in evaluating school performance for accreditation ratings and meeting No Child Left Behind regulations.

**PRE-LAS**—Pre-Language Assessment, a test of specific features of young children's oral language.

**PALS**—Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, a test of phonemic awareness which is important for reading.

**ESOL** — English Speakers of Other Languages.

## Science Fair Underway!

The first Aldrin Science Fair is underway with 65 applications!

Each participant will soon receive a packet with more information on how to complete their projects.

Plan to attend the Fair on Thursday, March 25 in the Aldrin Cafeteria from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Thank you to all volunteers who have stepped forward to help!

## ► All Around Aldrin

### Aldrin 2004 Testing Calendar

Spring is the big testing season in elementary schools around Fairfax County and it's important that your child be in school on testing days. To help you plan, here are the standardized testing dates for the remainder of the school year.

	Test	Dates
<b>ESOL Students</b> in Grades 2-6 that were exempt from Fall CogAT	CogAT	March 15-26
<b>ESOL</b> in Grade 6	Degrees of Reading Power	April 12-23
<b>ESOL</b> in Kindergarten	PRE-LAS	April 19-May 7
<b>ESOL</b> in Grades 1-6	ESOL Assessments	May 10-June 15
<b>Kindergarten</b>	PALS	May 3-28
<b>Grades 1-2</b>	Developmental Reading Assessment	May 12-June 9
<b>Grade 3</b>	SOL-Reading	May 19
	SOL-Writing	May 20
	SOL-Math	May 21
	SOL-History & Social Science	May 25
	SOL-Science	May 26
<b>Grade 4</b>	SOL History & Social Science	May 27
<b>Grade 5</b>	SOL-Writing (multiple choice)	March 9
	SOL-Writing (direct)	March 10
	SOL-Reading	May 25
	SOL-Math	May 26
	SOL-Science	May 27
<b>Grade 6</b>	SOL-History & Social Science	May 28

### Lots of Students Making Time to Read

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for participation. Remember that **all** at-home reading counts — even homework assignments — and don't forget to turn in your log sheets each week!

#### Hot Race for the Pizza Party

Last year, Mrs. Kern's class won the pizza party contest and guess what? They're off and running again this year, with already almost 18 segments read per student! Mr. Thomas' 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class and Mr. Frye's multi-age class are neck and neck for the second place spot. Check out the poster in the lobby to see that other classes are not far behind, though, so get those log-sheets in and read, read, READ! Keep it up, All-Stars!

#### Picking Up Your Book

Students earning a book should bring their certificate to the glass-windowed room across from the Tech Lab before school on Tuesday or Thursday mornings (8:45-9:10am). Someone will be there to help. Other book selection times will be made available very soon.

Thank you to the many families who donated books or money for this purpose!

## GT Programs Provide Enrichment Throughout Aldrin

**W**hat's the palindrome for "intelligent male sheep"? How about "Winnie's hula toy"?

Eileen Dunne uses brain teasers such as these to get her students' minds working when they join her each week.

Ms. Dunne is Aldrin's specialist for Gifted & Talented (GT) students. Each week, students from third to sixth grade are "pulled" from their regular classrooms to join Ms. Dunne for sixty to ninety minutes.

### Digging Deep

"Our sessions are a great opportunity for the kids to dig deep into a subject area and explore it for several months from a lot of angles. Right now, we're looking at different types of bridges. We'll be learning about the history and engineering of bridge-building, songs and poems about bridges, and the older kids will even get into the physics of bridge-building," Dunne enthused.

Students explore the language, math, science and history of each topic they study. Last semester, it was hurricanes. Next semester, it will be mysteries and drama.

### "Fill Your Brain!"

Fairfax County Public Schools mandates GT "pull-outs" for grades three to six. However, Ms. Dunne also regularly gets together with her Logical Thinkers and Reading Rustlers from grades one to three. And in fourth to sixth grades, she guides students in Socratic discussions of historical documents.

"I tell my students, 'You're not here to impress me or anyone else. You're here to fill your brain!' These kids are highly motivated to learn. We want them to have fun and to spend time with peers who are equally as motivated," commented Dunne.

Of course, GT resource classes are only one area of enrichment at Aldrin. The Principal's Challenge, Math Olympiad and Math 24 competition provide extra math opportunities. GRACE Art and Reflections are two PTA-sponsored programs that encourage art and creative expression. Students



*Some of Aldrin's 4th grade GT students show off their early work on bridges.*

can also stretch their minds in after-school programs such as the Chess Club and Odyssey of the Mind, before-school language programs and the new-this-year Science Fair.

### GT in Every Classroom

Plus, several times a year, Ms. Dunne visits each classroom to conduct GT "Good Thinking" lessons designed to stimulate creative and critical thinking. The teachers pick up useful techniques they can use in class and Ms. Dunne can evaluate students in a low-key setting. And the kids? They just have fun!

Ms. Dunne added, "I've been at Aldrin for eight years. This is a wonderful school in which to do this job. Parents are such advocates for their kids — they want those enrichment opportunities.

"I tell parents that GT is a **developing** characteristic. You can't teach it and you can't push a child to be gifted. But you **can** expose your children to lots of things. When they discover the right thing at the right time, then just watch them take off!" (By the way, the palindrome solutions are "smart rams" and "pooh hoop". But you already knew that, didn't you!)

### Parent GT Information Nights

February 10 at 7:30 p.m., Fairfax Government Center  
February 12 at 7:30 p.m., Langley High School  
Call the GT Program Office at 703.846.8670 for more information.

## Just the Facts: Gifted & Talented

Some children may require more challenge than what the standard school curriculum provides.

To best serve the needs of those children, FCPS offers **school-based** programs for children identified as "gifted and talented" (GT), as well as placement in full-time **GT Centers**. Students accepted for GT Center placement often have standardized test scores in the 98th percentile and above.



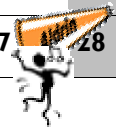
The Aldrin GT Screening Committee identifies children for these services by examining test data, progress reports, and the Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale which is completed by grade-level teachers. The GT Center screening does not begin until the end of second grade. Every Aldrin student in grades 2-6 is screened for GT placement every Spring.




Parents can also refer GT Center placement for their children. To do so, parents must complete the Referral Form and return it to Aldrin by **March 12, 2004**.

This form and comprehensive information is available at [www.fcps.edu/DIS/gt](http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/gt). You can also attend a Parent Information Night (see box, left) or call the GT Program Office at 703.846.8670.



## Mark Your Calendars

February 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 PTA 	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 	26	27 	28
29						

March 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 PTA	3	4	5	6 
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 	26 	27
28	29	30	31			

### February

- 10** **PTA Meeting** at Aldrin, 1 p.m., featuring Gary Cole on language arts and Donna Rich, Aldrin's special education parent ombudsman  
**Progress Reports** go home
- 12** **School-wide assembly, *Motion and Machines***, sponsored by the PTA
- 16** **School is Open! Snow Day Makeup**
- 18** **Cluster I Community Meeting**, at Long-fellow Middle School Library, 7 p.m.—educational issues
- 25** **Town Hall meeting**, at Aldrin, 7 p.m.
- 27** **Spirit Day—Bring Your Teddy Bear to School**  
**Family Fun Dance & Raffle** at Aldrin, 6 p.m.

### March

- 02** **PTA Meeting** at Aldrin, 7 p.m., featuring Linda Crittenden and Bobbi Yingling on Aldrin's math curriculum
- 06** **Odyssey of the Mind** regional competition
- 25** **Science Fair** at Aldrin's cafeteria, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- 26** **Spirit Day**

## Highlights of the Proposed 2005 FCPS Budget

**F**CPS out-going superintendent, Daniel Domenech, has proposed a 2005 budget totaling \$1.8 billion, an 8% increase over 2004. It also presents the key challenge for the school system as “continuing to provide a world-class education for all our students, with essentially no new programs or services.”

Next year, the school system is expected to provide services for almost 167,000 students, making it the 12th largest school division in the US. And it appears to do so cost-effectively — the Washington Area Boards of Education Guide places Fairfax County at about the mid-point with respect to cost of educating each student.

Budget pressures will grow, however. Although the student growth rate is slowing, the numbers of students with disabilities, from low-income families and who are English speakers of other languages (ESOL) is increasing. From 2000 to 2005, general education student numbers will increase 7.2%; ESOL, 79.8%; and special education, 18.1%.

While it costs an estimated \$9201 per year to educate a general education student, ESOL students cost an additional \$3,071. Special education students cost an estimated \$16,701. The FCPS budget works to address these growing expenses, while committing to remain competitive by making FCPS employees the highest paid in the region.

For full details on the proposed budget and how you can make your voice heard, visit [www.fcps.edu/news/fy2005.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/news/fy2005.htm)