



The Firebird Screams

“Ask not for whom the Firebird screams, he screams for you!” - Fred the Firebird

MARCH 12, 2015

VOLUME #2 NUMBER #6



WAH-HOOOO! Fred the Formerly Frozen Firebird here: spring is just around the corner, and I, for one, could not be more ready for the warm weather to return. Have you ever tried to keep a flame alive in the kind of cold, wet, miserable weather we have had so much of lately? So now try to imagine what that kind of weather does to someone like me, who must stay on fire all the time to stay healthy! Trust me, it's no picnic. Talk about ruffled feathers!

This edition of the SCREAMER is full of important stuff for parents – new information as well as critical reminders. Please take the time to read it through to the end; there is guaranteed to be some stuff here you need to know about!

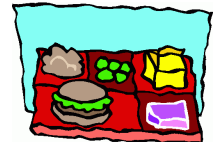
Snow Make-Up Days

The Board of Directors has set **Thursday March 26th** (formerly a teacher workday), **Monday April 6th** (formerly Easter Monday holiday), and **Friday May 1st** (formerly a teacher workday) as snow makeup days. That still leaves us two snow days and four 2-hour delays not scheduled for makeup; we have enough extra instructional hours in our calendar to account for the time we missed on those days. If we miss any more days or instructional hours for weather, however, we will be very close to our limit. For that reason, for the convenience of parents who need to plan ahead, **Friday March 27th** (currently a teacher workday) has also been pre-designated as our next snow makeup day, if we need one before then.



4th Quarter Lunches

Better hurry – next Friday, March 20th, is the last day you can order hot catered lunches for the fourth quarter! **After March 20th at 5:00pm, NO MORE LUNCH ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!** The system will automatically close the ordering period and it cannot be opened or changed from that point on. Please make sure your order is **paid in full** before 5:00pm on March 20th! If your order is not paid in full by the 5:00pm deadline, the order will be automatically deleted by the system and your child will not receive hot lunch for the last 9 weeks. If you are not sure if your payment has been accepted, please call Mrs. Carden at 919-964-9003 or e-mail her at haleycarden@fallslakeacademy.com.



Hot lunch orders will be delivered through Tuesday, May 26th. After that date, no more hot lunches will be delivered this year due to testing, which requires us to keep our daily lunchtime flexible. All students will need to bring their own lunches from home for the last two weeks of school.

Revised Calendar

In order to line up our 2016 Spring Break with the GCS calendar, our calendar for next year has been revised. Please find a copy of our calendar for next school year, 2015-2016, attached to this edition of the SCREAMER.



Make-up Lunches



The following days will be used to make up lunches for all the snow days:

Tuesday March 10th: American Hero will bring the lunches ordered for that day **plus** the lunches missed when school was out on February 17th.

Wednesday March 17th (PBL ½day): American Hero will bring the lunches missed on February 24th **plus** McDonald's will bring the lunch missed on February 19th.

Thursday March 26th (snow makeup day): McDonalds will bring the lunches missed on February 26th **plus** Chic-Fil-A will bring the lunches missed on February 18th.

We recognize that this means that some kids will get two lunches some days, and several kids will have to bring their makeup lunch home on early-release PBL day March 25th, but this is the best option for us at this time. Some parents have asked about crediting toward next quarter, but that would involve someone taking hours and hours to go into every single account individually, and we don't have the manpower or the time to get this done before the next window closes. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Afternoon Madness!

All parents, please note: we're sorry, but we must insist that parent drivers who pick up students through the carpool line or park-and-ride lot in the afternoons absolutely must stay in line. Going around other cars is dangerous, even reckless, and could result in serious injury to students, or worse. We hate to sound threatening, but for the sake of our kids' safety, Dr. D has issued instructions to the staff members running the afternoon carpool to call the Butner P.D. whenever we have reckless drivers on campus threatening the safety of our kids. So please: follow the rules and stay out of trouble! Isn't that what we all tell our kids, all the time? Let's please model that behavior ourselves!



Morning Madness!

Just like the "Afternoon Madness" elsewhere in this *SCREAMER*, we are also seeing more and more problems in the morning drop-off line. The rule is very simple in the mornings: whoever the staff member on duty is (it's usually Coach Vincent), that person is in charge. When they signal for you to pull up, please do so; don't stop way down the line to let your kids out, requiring everybody behind you to wait. Thanks in advance for your courtesy.



Where is the Playground Money???

This has become the most-asked question floating around FLA for the last several weeks. So I took it upon my little flaming self to check with PTA President Brandi Chappell. Here is what she said:

“Why Fred, I’m glad you asked! The PTA has been collecting money from donations and fundraising projects to fund the playground, but we don’t have quite enough yet to pay for it. Playgrounds are outrageously expensive because of the state insurance regulations; the one we want could cost as much as \$45,000 or more, including installation! And that’s just a moderate playground with a few items – the big, lavish ones cost \$100,000 and more! So we’re saving up all the money we’ve collected in a special DO-NOT-TOUCH “Playground Fund,” and we pledge not to touch a cent of that money until we use it for an FLA playground! Don’t worry, all the money is accounted for and protected, and it will all eventually go to the construction of a playground here at FLA.”

Whew! I was sure glad to hear that, because I gave some money to that fund, and I was beginning to get a little concerned!



The FLA PTA Is Flying High

We want to thank the PTA for their tireless efforts on behalf of our kids! Here’s what’s coming up for the PTA:

- Applebee’s Flapjack Fundraiser is coming up next Saturday, March 21st. Please come eat breakfast with us at Applebees in Briar Creek from 7:30 - 10:00. The breakfast will include three pancakes, two sausages, syrup, butter, and a drink. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for kids. A ticket order form is attached to the e-mail carrying this edition of the *SCREAMER*. Applebee’s is preparing the food, but we need volunteers for greeting, serving, and bussing tables. Students are welcome to volunteer, but they must have a parent with them. Use the link below to sign up!

- Falls Lake Academy Bingo night is coming up on Friday, April 17th. We need your help! Here’s the link to sign up: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b084da8ac22a31-bingo/>

Thank you for continuing to support FLA!

Calendar of Events

Attached to this e-mail please find the latest revised FLA Calendar of Events, listing all non-athletic events of interest to our students and parents. Note that some events, dates, times, and places have changed from when the last Calendar of Events went out; other events have been added (listed in **bold print**). Please print this out and/or store it on your home computer and keep it handy; you don’t want to miss all the great things going on at FLA!



International Baccalaureate

If you've read the FLA High School Plan (available on our website), you know we are looking at the possibility of pursuing the International Baccalaureate ("IB") as an option for highly-motivated students who are aiming at advanced college placement. The IB is very intense and very effective in terms of preparing students for success in college, but it is also very expensive. There are some other questions as to its suitability for FLA as well.

At the Board meeting next Tuesday, March 17th, the Board plans to name an IB Feasibility Study Committee as the first step in officially considering the IB for FLA. This committee will include Board members, staff members, and interested parents. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the IB Feasibility Study Committee, please contact Dr. D, Ms. Maxson, or any Board member **before the Board meeting on March 17th** to indicate your interest.



FLA Scores on 2013-14 Tests Are Among the Highest

FLA students scored among the top student scores in the North-central part of the state last year, according to the NC Department of Public Instruction's recent release of scores for all NC public and charter schools. Our middle school scores were **the highest** in Granville County and most surrounding counties, and our elementary scores were among the highest as well. Some parents have asked how we can be so happy with an overall School Report Card grade of "C," to which Dr. D replied with a smile, "Because almost no elementary or middle schools across the state made an 'A' or a 'B.' We're up there near the top!"

Student and Parent-Family Volunteer Hours

Remember that the PTA request that all families with kids enrolled in FLA try to put in fifteen hours' service to the school this year. You can enter and track your volunteer hours by following the link on the Parents' tab of the FLA website.

Students, on the other hand, need ten school or community service hours in order to be promoted to the next grade. Keep checking the website for updates on volunteer opportunities for both students and parents.



Spring Crunch Time

Now is the time when it becomes critical for students to catch up, knuckle down, and get their academic ducks in a row to get ready for End-of-Grade Tests and middle school NC State Final Exams. We have been experiencing an epidemic of “Not Doing the Work” across all grades this last few months, and the FLA teachers and administration are concerned that it will soon be too late for some students to catch up. Parents, please stay in close contact with your child’s PAA and make sure you know about work he or she has not turned in, or that he/she has turned in but didn’t do well on. In case the higher-than-usual number of kids who failed their grades here at FLA last year for not doing their work didn’t warn you, please be warned now: students who do not do their academic work at FLA **are not promoted**. If your child is behind, now is the time to get serious about pushing them to get it together. Promotion / retention decisions are only thirteen weeks away!



After-School Supervision



We have a problem: unsupervised students roaming the halls after school. All parents, please note: every FLA student, every grade and class, every age, must be picked up by 3:30pm every afternoon. Students who are still here at 3:30pm have two choices: they can either be involved in a regular school activity (sports team practice or game, club meeting, etc.) which is supervised by a staff member or Board-approved parent volunteer, or they can go to the FAST after-school program. If they are involved in a school activity, then they must be picked up immediately following the end of that activity or report to FAST. If they go to FAST, either right after school at 3:30 or following the school activity, parents will be charged.

Please understand that the problem is a safety issue: we simply do not have the staff manpower to act as free babysitters in the afternoon after school. Even middle school students, older than elementary students though they are, need supervision. Our staff members are involved in supervising sports and clubs and other activities, engaging in meetings and team collaborations, tutoring individual and small groups of students, and then – after a workday that begins at 7:30am and often isn't over until 5:00pm or later, they should be free to go home and be with their own families. THERE IS NO ONE AVAILABLE TO SUPERVISE FREE-ROAMING STUDENTS AFTER SCHOOL HOURS.

The policy is simple: parents must see to their kids being picked up on time. If not, they must be prepared to pay for FAST program participation. That's the only way we can ensure our kids' safety. Thank you for understanding.



Recently the *Butner-Creedmoor News* ran a feature article on Falls Lake Academy's success in student performance measures. For those of you who didn't get to read it, the full text of that article is reprinted here:

Falls Lake Academy Scores at the Top of Granville County Student Performance Measures, Announces Opening of FLA High School in August

"We are elated," says Falls Lake Academy Principal Dr. Robert Daniel. "The numbers are out," he adds, referring to last week's release of NC state public school student performance results and school ratings, "and they tell the story."

The NC Department of Public Instruction rates Falls Lake Academy, an independent public charter school, a grade of "C," with a School Performance composite score of 63. Of Granville County Schools' nine elementary schools, only three scored higher; those three were separated from FLA by a margin of only five points and they also were rated "C." Only one of GCS's four middle schools scored "C;" the others were rated "D."

The significance of the numbers is clear when FLA's performance-by-grade is broken down and compared to the state's overall numbers and with Granville County School's numbers. ***Falls Lake Academy posted the highest student performance grades in the county in 3rd-grade Reading, 5th-grade Reading, and in all areas of middle school (grades 6-8) student performance: 6th- and 7th - grade Reading and Math and overall 6th-and 7th-grade performance.*** (These state middle school ratings are for school year 2013-2014, FLA's first year in operation, when they did not yet have an 8th-grade class.) In 3rd-grade overall, 5th-grade Science, and 5th-grade overall scores, FLA scored second-highest in the county. FLA was 3rd-highest in Granville County in 3rd-grade Math and 4th-grade Reading scores. In addition, ***FLA numbers are higher than the state averages in everything except 4th-grade and 6th-grade, where they are only slightly below.*** "Not bad for a school in its very first year," says Daniel. "Not bad at all."

Daniel is quick to point to his staff, which he calls "superior in every way," when asked the secret of FLA's academic success. "Every principal dreams of being able to assemble his team from scratch, choosing the best available people for each opening," he said. "That's what I was able to do here, when we opened Falls Lake Academy in August of 2013, and again this year when we expanded into 8th-grade." He also gives credit to "the most committed parents in the world" and to the FLA Board of Directors, who worked tirelessly for nearly four years to design, prepare, and open the finest school in the state. "We're well on our way to realizing that goal," he said, "and we will reach it in the very near future. You can count on it."

The Falls Lake Academy academic program is designed around a commitment to "research-based best practices in the classroom first, last, and in-between," in Daniel's words. "If the research says it works, then we try to incorporate it. If the research says it doesn't work, then we don't do it." The results speak for themselves.

Falls Lake Academy added 8th-grade this year. In Daniel's estimation, his 8th-graders can hold their own with anyone, and will demonstrate that when this year's scores are released next year. It's a good thing, too, he says, because FLA will open the first year of its high school when it starts next August with the first 9th-grade class that will eventually graduate from Falls Lake Academy High School in June 2019. The State Board of Education last week approved FLA's petition to expand its projected 9th-grade class. "The 9th-grade class is an expansion," Daniel says. "We have more than 40 open slots for next year's 9th-grade. By state law, every North Carolina student who applies is accepted, unless there are more applications than there are open slots. If that happens, we hold a random enrollment lottery." Applications for next year's 9th-grade class are now being accepted, through March 7th. The enrollment lottery will be held on March 20th.

Students who are considering applying to FLA's 9th-grade class next year should note that the school offers the whole range of activities available to students in any small high school, anywhere in the state. Daniel explains, "Our program will include a full range of athletics, including almost every sport offered at any 1A-size high school anywhere in North Carolina. We also offer a wide range of electives, including Art, Band, Chorus, Dance, and Computer Science, and we'll eventually expand to offer additional electives as our students move up through the high school grade levels, including advanced PE courses and other academically-related offerings such as Foreign Languages – Spanish, German, and Mandarin are currently being considered – and special-interest courses such as Creative Writing, Theatre Arts, Peer Tutoring and Mentoring, and specialized Math and Science electives." He also points out that next year's high school freshmen will have a choice between standard-level and honors-level academic courses and will eventually have access to AP coursework in the higher grades. Finally, the school is tentatively considering pursuit of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, widely recognized as the single most effective college prep course of study in the world. "Our goal is very simple to remember," Daniel says. "We want to be this area's premier college-prep high school. And we are committed to doing everything possible to make that happen."

Parents who are interested in applying in this year's enrollment lottery for their students to enter FLA in August 2015 in grades K-9 can do so online, by following the Application links on the school's website: www.fallslakeacademy.com, or by picking up a paper application at the school during regular school hours.

Our Library is Booming!!!

Our Library is Booming! We have more than 2500 books processed and ready to go home! We still have about 1500 to process. At our last Mega-Marathon Library Processing day, we had more than 40 volunteers and got 1400 books stickered and in the computer system. We'll be holding another Mega-marathon Library Processing day on March 28th. It's easy. It's fun. And any adult or middle school student can earn up to six volunteering hours by coming to help out. Please use this link to sign up: <http://tinyurl.com/fla-mega2>



Help Us Keep the Library Open At Lunch

We'd like to open the library more often during student lunches, but we need some adult supervision! We'll open the library anyday we have a volunteer from 12:15-12:45. You can help students find/choose books, you can check them out, or you can be just an adult presence making sure that students are behaving like the responsible Firebirds we know them to be. We do have lots of student help as well.



The library will only be open during lunch on days that we have adult volunteers. Please sign up for any day from now to the end of the school year using this link: <http://tinyurl.com/fla-openlibrary>

Okay, Firebird families, that's it for another edition of "The Firebird SCREAMS." The Firebird who is SCREAMING is me, Fred the Firebird, the Keeper of the Flame of Learning which burns away ignorance and sophistry.

The FLA Firebirds are ON FIRE for learning as they TAKE FLIGHT into their futures and fortunes. And that makes this place, Falls Lake Academy,

The HOME OF THE FIREBIRDS and the SEAT OF BURNIN' LEARNIN'!

Until next time, Fred the Firebird wishing you all a great Spring!

