

Grahamwood Elementary Happenings

A Shelby County Optional School
Pete Johnson, Principal

What's New at School?

February was a busy month at Grahamwood Elementary. Students got to participate in a number of activities and competitions. Here are a few.

Congratulations to Kelly George who coached Grahamwood's competitive cheer squad to 1st place at the Rockin' Victory Cheer Spirit competition. "It is really fun being a cheerleader. We all work together during practice and to



do stunts", says 5th grader Emoree McFerren. "Cheer is a fun environment!"



Not to be outdone, three Grahamwood chess teams qualified and competed at the state level. The K-3 team won first place in their division. Additionally, the 4th and 5th

Kindergarten, 1st grade, and Morgan Pittman's Functional Skills class celebrated the 100th Day of School. Kindergarten students dressed up as they imagine they might look at age 100. Their math lessons highlighted the number 100. Parents enjoyed spending a morning on activities that revolved around the number 100.

grade team rocked it by coming in 3rd in the Tennessee State Chess Tournament.

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*Grahamwood
Elementary Dragons*

Upcoming Events:

1/2 Day Students

*March 13 dismissal begins at 11:45 a.m.

Spring Break

*No School March 16-20

4th Quarter Begins

* Final Report Card period starts March 23
Report Cards Issued

*Sent home with students on April 1

Spring Break 2/Good Friday

*No School April 10

Learning is Fun at Grahamwood

Internationally recognized anti-bullying advocate and rapper Roben X visited aftercare to share his message. He was invited by the Aftermath Academy after school program which is headed up by Grahamwood's own Elizabeth McKinney. Students enjoyed learning through his stories and music.



Andrew Martin sponsors the *Fuel Up to Play (FUTP)* club that

engages students in character building activities. "My 60 FUTP students recently went

rock climbing at Memphis Rox. "We took the trip not only to have fun, but to build on leader-

ship skills we've been working on", stated Martin. "They persevered climbing tough obstacles but the greatest thing was seeing them lend a helping hand to their peers to lift them up, and encourage them to keep climbing!"

The Jump Rope for Hearts celebration was held last month. Over \$15,000 was raised for the American Heart Association! Way to go, Grahamwood!

Our Students are Amazing!

On Saturday, April 4th three Grahamwood Elementary students will receive awards for their entries in the TN Poetry Society's Elementary Poetry Contest. Scarlett Niu won 2nd Place for *Oh Map!*,

Zuleyma Estrada Pena won 4th Place for *Maid to Made*, and Honorable Mention went to Raymond Cui for *Greed*. Way to go, student poets!

Grahamwood piano students recently performed at the Piano Festival at Jackson State Uni-

versity. Kinsley Babineaux earned a perfect score of 100 for her performance. Kinsley also won the Outstanding Performer Award for Grades 1-3. Kinsley is a 2nd grader in Carolyn Mendillo's 2nd grade Optional class.

Did You Know?

- Optional Application & General Choice Transfer processes are open online: www.scsk12.org/schoolchoice/
- Grahamwood Elementary has about 400 Optional qualified students
- Grahamwood has over 300 students in the PreK-5th CLUE program
- School sponsors include Kroger, FedEx & Rhodes College

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Teacher Spotlight: Cameshia Chambers

Grahamwood is proud to have Cameshia Chambers is an Optional 1st grade teacher. Previously, she taught for 2 years at Dunbar where her students won the annual Science Fair Competition. She joined us in 2014.



Ms. Chambers passion for teaching is obvious from the moment you meet her. "I love to see the growth in students," she states. "As a primary teacher, one of the joys is that you can see a big change from the beginning of the school year to the end."

Ms. Chambers grew up in Memphis and as she says, "I am the product of public schools." She graduated from Craigmont High School.

At Middle Tennessee State, she earned a B.S. in Elementary Education and then a Master degree in Education from Union University.

She also earned a Pre-K endorsement. "Before getting my degree in education, I taught 4-5 year olds in a child care center," says Chambers. "From this experience, I developed a passion for teaching young children because I like teaching the foundational skills needed for students to progress and prosper."

Teaching is in Ms. Chambers, family.

Her mother works for the school system. Ms. Chambers is the oldest of three children. When not at school, she loves visiting Florida's beaches and spending time with family in Orlando.

Observing Ms. Chambers teach is a motivating experience. Her level of educational expertise and professionalism is inspiring!

Grahamwood Elementary School's Vision Statement:

Grahamwood Elementary School is an exemplary, student-centered educational community with an exceptional team of stakeholders who create a nurturing environment where all students achieve academic excellence, exhibit good character, and hopes and dreams are encouraged.

Attendance Expectations:

Please be sure to have your children at school everyday, on time and for the whole day. If your children are missing any part of a school day, our outstanding educators cannot teach them and they are denied the opportunity to learn.

Focus On: Melissa Idleman and Special Education

Grahamwood Elementary School serves all students. We are unique in our diversity. At last count, we were 38% Caucasian, 24% Latino, 22% African-American, 13% Asian, and 3% multiple races. Beyond ethnicity, Grahamwood is rich in students of different cultures, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We are also diverse in academic abilities with approximately 50% of the students being Optional School qualified and 50% Scholars plus a CLUE program with over 300 students receiving CLUE/Gifted services.

Grahamwood Elementary proudly serves another group of students who need Special Education services. This program is commonly known as Instructional Resource. These children require both pull-out and in class inclusive instruction that goes beyond typical classroom teaching methods.

We are very fortunate at Grahamwood Elementary to have Melissa Idleman heading up our Special Education Department. She is joined by Cynthia Granger. Ms. Idleman works with the intermediate level students while Ms. Granger works with younger students. We also added a Functional Skills class this year lead by Morgan Pittman.

Ms. Idleman says, "I love teaching! I have wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl. It's all I have ever wanted to do." Ms. Idleman shared that she struggled as a student in school. Her educational fate was changed by a teacher who had faith in her—making her believe

she could achieve.

Ms. Idleman chose Special Education due to her personal struggles as well as having a cousin who had disabilities.

"My cousin was deemed Special Education and I enjoyed working with her as we grew up. I came to realize that everyone is capable of achievement provided we offer them the proper tools and guidance. I do whatever is necessary to ensure my students achieve."

At Grahamwood, we strive to provide the highest quality education that meets the needs of all students at their point of need. To this end, we are thrilled to have such dedicated educators as Ms. Idleman and Ms. Granger serving our Special Ed students!

