Message from the Principal...

Raising Teens: Nobody Ever Said It was Easy
by Michele DeAndrea-Austin, Principal at Bell Middle School

It’s no lie; raising children is hard – especially raising middle school kids. Both my kids, who are in high school now, made the transformation from child to teenager differently. My son, the older of the two, gradually became forgetful and goofy (no better word to describe it). He’s what educators like to call “a verbal processor.” In layman’s terms: he talks a lot. My daughter went from little girl to full-blown teen girl within about 10 seconds of turning 13. She wants to hide in her room and read most times and goes from a sweetie to “eye-rolling teen” at the speed of light. I can report that little has changed for either one, so far, since this transformation happened.

My kids are just two demonstrations of millions of different ways kids begin their journey into adulthood via the Teenager Express. As parents, what’s the best way to handle these changes and mood swings? I wish I had the single, perfect answer. If I did, I would be selling books and retire early. However, while I will never claim to be an expert, I can say that I have been hanging out with teenagers the majority of my 20+ years as an educator. I have seen a lot and learned a few things along the way. Research backs much of what I have learned through my observations and experiences. Below is the first of a two part series with tips on raising teenagers in the 21st century:

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Raising Teens, continued...

1. **Set Boundaries** – No matter how much your child starts to look like an adult at this stage (some do), they are *still kids; they need and actually want boundaries.* Think about the process of setting boundaries as a high-stakes negotiation. If you’re being unrealistic (too strict), then your teenager will walk away from the table and you’re setting your him/her up to fail. If you’re too trusting (too loose), you may feel resentful or anxious about your child’s safety. So, there may be non-negotiables that you put forth upfront. However, the negotiation should include something that your child can have some control over. This gives your child a sense of fairness and ownership.

2. **Really know your teenager** – You may have known your teens when they were children, but they are changing. So, know their friends; know their friends’ families; know their online activity; know how they’re doing in school. Early on, set the expectation that daily you *will* talk about your child’s day. Then, ask your child open-ended questions about school, specific classes, friends, teachers, jobs, lunch, activities, etc. Show a genuine interest and *show them that you’re listening by paraphrasing what they said back to them or asking follow-up questions to their answers.* If they try blowing you off, then don’t let them! Tell them you will continue to ask until they share something meaningful, which could take 10 minutes or an hour, but it is up to them. We all seem to spend a lot of time driving around from place-to-place, and this is the *perfect* time for a chat; you *always have a captive audience with your children at this time.* So, take advantage of it! With my daughter (you know, the one who wants to hide in her room all day and read) I cherish the 20 minutes I have in the car between her dance studio and home for this very reason. The more you talk with your child, the more you will be able to recognize if something is wrong, and they may be more likely to share with you their fears, feelings, successes, and failures. This opens-up your opportunity to help educate your child about healthy ways to handle conflict, take some personal responsibility for themselves, and show empathy toward others.

3. **Stay close, but keep your distance** – What? Most teenagers are going to push you away. They’re desperately seeking independence during this stage in their lives, and yet, they are still *kids.* We, as parents, might want to cling-on desperately to their childhood, and hold-on too tight. In turn, this could cause some rebellion. So, set the boundaries for them and gradually release them to having more freedom as they earn your trust. Most importantly, *let them know in advance,* what your expectations are, given the additional freedom. Some might call this *defined autonomy.* A great example of this is with their phones. This a true rite of passage for teenagers, and they *love their phones.* As parents, we want our kids to have phones for safety reasons, but we also know that it can invite a lot of drama and dangers into their world. So, while you can give your child a phone, it does not mean they should have free reign with it, inviting the whole world into their lives. One way to have *defined autonomy* with teens’ phones is to make sure *parental controls* are set on your child’s phone. This requires your approval for all of their apps. You can also put other limitations on their phone use. To learn more about this, contact your provider.

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Raising Teens, continued...

4. Technology and Social Media – Social media is yet another reason to make sure you have enabled parent controls on your children’s devices. As parents, we never had to contend with the same kind of technology as our teens do. It’s a whole new world that our kids are trying to navigate. My advice: limit this. For more information for parents about how to talk to your kids about technology, visit: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/screen-time/age/teens/

Additionally, when it comes to social media, I have seen far too many situations of bullying and malicious postings on social media from and to teenagers. The police ticket many teen perpetrators of such postings. It is the main reason we have a “No Cell Phones” policy in classes, lunch, or at recess this year. Even scarier, there are a lot of predators looking for teenage victims through social media. So, do not take this lightly. We are lucky in Jeffco that we had the first online crimes investigative unit (called Cheezo) in the country. Nevertheless, the best prevention from having your children fall victim to an online crime is you, the parent. If you choose to allow your child to have social media (or do online gaming), then the #1 rule for your teenager that they have heard in Cheezo assemblies at school is never talk to anyone online that you don’t know face-to-face. Never. Another piece of advice is require your child to make you a part of their group or “friend” you on their social media.

For more information, please go to http://jeffco.us/sheriff/crime-prevention-safety/cheezo/parents/

You may be asking, why the advice column from Mrs. DeAndrea this month? First, with the help of our amazing PTA, we will be showing Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age on March 19. This documentary addresses some of these difficult issues that we face as parents. Tickets are $5/adult and students are free. To get tickets, please see the Bell Website and scroll down on the home page. Second, it seemed timely in light of recent events. As I mentioned in a letter I sent out last week, trusted and involved adults in teenagers’ lives make a significant difference both in school safety, as well as in raising well-adjusted, high functioning young adults. At Bell, we will continue with our social/emotional lessons, community circles, restorative practices, forming positive relationships, and assigning consequences, if appropriate. However, I genuinely believe that the school is in a partnership with parents, and I know that we can be better and more effective when we work as a team. Coming next month… part two of the two-part series. Have a great month!
Counseling

Thank you for registering your student for the 2018-2019 school year! Schedules will be released in August 2018 and we will try our very best to honor elective selections.

6th grade Counselor, Erin Ballweg, will be out on Maternity leave from Spring Break until January 2019. She will have two wonderful subs filling in for her during this time. Their contact information will be published in the March newsletter. Please connect with Erin for immediate questions or concerns.

Vocal Music

Don't miss our band, orchestra, and choir concert on March 14 at 6:30 p.m! Our Echo choir has been working hard preparing music in a variety of styles and also practicing sight-singing, rhythm reading, and vocal technique. They sound amazing and you'll want to hear their performance!

Our production of The Lion King has been cast and rehearsals are underway. Our tech crew class has started designing and creating our sets, costumes, masks, and props. Mark your calendar now to come experience The Lion King, Jr. May 10 and 11 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium!

The acting-focused Musical Theater class is working on monologues and will soon tackle duet scenes and one-act plays as well. They will showcase their work this semester in a performance on April 19 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium.

Golden High School Dance Team will be having an informational meeting at GHS on Monday, Feb. 26th at 6:30pm.

We invite all interested students and parents to come and meet the new coach, ask questions, and get information about tryouts for the 2018-19 school year.

Prices you can SMILE About

Se Habla Español Most Major Insurances Accepted

BelmarOrthodontics.com
Assessment News

State assessments are right around the corner. Please refer to the below information regarding this years’ testing schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>CMAS Content Area</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,7,8</td>
<td>Math &amp; English/ Language Arts</td>
<td>March 20, 21, 22 Students will take two tests per day and complete the testing cycle in three days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Week of April 9th (exact dates to be determined)</td>
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- Please make sure that students are at school all day during testing dates. If students are absent or miss tests due to an appointment or vacation plans, they will need to be pulled from core classes after Spring Break for test make-up.
- If students have ear buds, please have them bring them to school on testing dates (portions of the test have listening components).

If you have any questions regarding state assessments, please contact:

Allison Johnson
Instructional Coach
Bell Middle School
alajohns@jeffco.k12.co.us

Sponsorship space in this newsletter is extremely affordable! Reach parents in your local community & support schools! Businesses that want to sponsor this school, please contact TSCA at info@tscaschools.com or 970-239-1641.
ESL Corner

In Literacy Acceleration classes students have been reading books of different genres. They have been applying and refining their critical thinking and analysis skills, as well as improving their reading and writing skills.

*The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery – the timeless classics…

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ESL Corner, continued...

*The Dreamer* by Pam Munoz Ryan and Peter Sis – a childhood story of Chilean poet Pablo
PTA Corner

Join us for a special showing of “SCREENAGERS: Growing Up in the Digital Age”:
Monday, March 19, 2018 at 6pm in the Bell Auditorium

The Bell PTA along with the staff at Bell Middle School are thrilled to present SCREENAGERS: Growing Up in the Digital Age, a documentary about the biggest parenting issue of our time.

SCREENAGERS addresses the most pervasive parenting topic head on—depicting teen struggles over social media, video games and internet addiction. The film empowers kids to best navigate the digital world and provides practical resources to help them do it. See a preview here: SCREENAGERS (Official Trailer)

The movie will be presented at Bell on Monday, March 19, 2018 at 6pm in the Bell Auditorium. Students are free and invited to attend (Students do need to reserve a free ticket). Adults are only $5.

Buy tickets here: https://impactflow.com/event/presented-by-bell-middle-school-pta-6951

Next PTA Meeting – Tuesday, March 6th in the Bell Library @ 5 pm
Come here the latest happenings with Bell and the PTA at our monthly meeting!

We will have a special guest speaker from the Colorado Education Network at the March meeting who will provide helpful, non-partisan information about how Colorado funds public schools.
Girls in STEM Club

On Sunday, February 4th, the Girls in STEM club participated in the Golden Library’s Girls in STEM competition. This competition is run in conjunction with the School of Mines DECTECH students, Jeffco Library, the International Day of Women. The results of the Girls in STEM competition are as follows:

**Honorable Mention:** Robots save lives: Cassi Valverde, Elise Henderson, Mikyla Magrid (6th grade)

**3rd Place:** CO2 in limestone: Kit Arbuckle, Paige Farewell, Kyra Warnecke, Lilly Bestor (7th grade)

**2nd place:** Space saving homes: Gabby Macerelli, Norah Schumacher, Maddie Blair (8th grade)

**1st Place (tie):** Vertical Garden: Sasha Bandock, Sophia Eakes (8th grade)

Lucky the Robot: Kyra Jordan, Ryleigh Lavigne, Libby Girard (6th grade)

These ladies will be awarded at the International Day of Women luncheon in March.

The Girls in STEM club will not meet on Thursdays until after Spring Break. We will be hosting Girls in STEM events at the Golden Library on February 26th and March 19th. Please sign up with Ms. Bates or Ms. Flores if you are interested in helping with these events.

**We will be hosting an overnight hackathon on Friday, April 6th.** More details to follow! If you are interested in helping supervise or mentor students with block programming, please email Ms. Flores: jflores@jeffcoschools.us.

Thank you for all of your support!
Seventh Grade iSTEM Field Trip

On March 1, the 7th grade iSTEM team will participate in a guided field trip to the Denver Zoo to directly observe and understand animal behavior and adaptation. For the past few weeks, the students have been learning about adaptations and studying the habitat and needs of a specific animal species. The Denver Zoo brought skulls, pelts, and living animals for students to investigate and have helped students understand the methods of exhibit engineers and field biologists.

As for the final project, students will be creating immersion animal enclosures and call of actions for their study species. Each team of students will present their final designs to the Denver Zoo on March 23, and the top three teams will represent Bell Middle School at the Denver Zoo Science Expo. Our top three teams will be competing with schools from all around the metro area for a chance to win a behind the scenes tour.
Computer Applications and Science

Students in both classes are building strong **keyboarding skills** by doing 10 minutes of keyboarding to start class, writing their reflection paragraphs, and when they create their projects. These keyboarding practices will ensure that they are proficient keyboardists within the next 12 weeks of the semester. Students need to reach at least 40 words per minute (WPM) to get their picture on the classroom WPM Hall of fame! We already have several students that have entered the coveted Keyboarding Wall of Fame.

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Class introductions were made by all students using the **Goanimate application**. GoAnimate is a cloud-based platform for making animated videos. Students delivered positive information about their background, interests, and hopes for the future to the class. Students in both computer classes also created and updated their student websites to get ready for conferences.

**Computer Science** created wonderful **8-bit Pixel** “works of art” using Excel. They also made coded keyboards using the Word program and Word Art. See these wonderful works displayed in the hallway, on Mr. Sautel’s website, at student led conferences or on each student’s websites in the coming weeks. Computer Science will build **video games using coding**. Students will create storylines that fit their games. These games will include frogger, flappy bird, asteroids, mazes and many others.

**Computer Applications** have started learning about the **stock market** and about how to make investments. In another project coming soon, the students will pick a favorite **“Country of the World”** that they actually plan on visiting someday. The classes will take an extensive tour of over 100 world countries and learn about the history, culture, activities, currency, flag, national anthem, famous people, government, sports, religion and cuisine. Students calculate the cost of the trip, including their airfare and hotel. This three project enhances student understanding of the various cultures in today’s world.