

THE LEARNING Curve

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Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

Academic Competition for all Subjects

Quiz Bowl



Lane Elementary's Quiz Bowl team shows off their championship trophy.

With hands on buzzers, the two teams of four face off across the tables, separated only by a few feet of open space and the Moderator. First to buzz in, the player, if answering correctly, earns his team ten points and a chance at a ten point bonus question. If they

miss the bonus, it goes to the team, "so both teams have a shot," says Springdale Elementary Gifted teacher Peggy Nipper.

Its Quiz Bowl, played around the county in two divisions: 4th/5th grades and 6th grade. Held for more than 20 years, each team practices weekly from October through February. In that time, three preliminary rounds are conducted to help prepare them for the final competition.

Each participating school is limited to ten members on a team, but only four can compete at a time. Each head-to-head game consists of ten toss up questions and ten bonus questions, and between questions five and six, the team completes a written worksheet together with ten items on it needing to be identified. Should the game end in a tie, toss up questions are asked until a team can come up with a correct answer.

"Our children work very hard, and their coach works very hard with them," says Lane Elementary Principal Dr. Sherri Flagg of Coach Robin Wyche and her team, which one first in the 4th/5th grade division this year. "She got them to practice, she got them the material, and they really gelled as a team."

Lane 4th grader Jake Taylor and 5th grader Daniel Eberlein - who is also the team captain - both began sitting in on team practice's when they were in 3rd grade. "At first, I was there as a learning experience," says Eberlein.

"Mrs. Wyche just walked up and asked if I wanted [to join]," says Taylor, quickly adding it's been a lot of fun actually being on the team and plans on doing it every year.

In practices, Wyche will pit them against each other, two on two, in practice rounds using sample questions. They also will have assigned reading as well as mini-lessons on topics that might not have been covered in their classes.

"I wanted to learn on a higher level," says 5th grader Tederic Palmer.

Eberlein and Taylor both agree Palmer and 5th grader Parker Toland really stepped up this year and became key players. It takes a clear head and a quick buzz-in to get the jump on the other team, they say. "I'm fast at buzzing in, and I thought this would be a good experience," says Toland.

"[The competitions] are very nerve-wracking," says Eberlein. "It's very intense."

In the 4th/5th grade division, the final results (1st - 6th) were Lane, Heritage, Carter, Bernd, Heard, and Barden Elementaries. Winners in the 6th grade division (1st - 3rd) were Howard, Rutland, and Miller Middles.

First in Math Challenge

Four hands resting on the edge of the table, muscles tensed and ready for action. Standing by is the group's proctor, hand on the deck of cards waiting for the call to begin. Row upon row of table, more than 150 students from 21 elementary schools are grouped similarly, each vying for a top position in order to advance to the state competition.

This is the fourth annual First in Math Challenge tournament, featuring the 24Game, which has students focusing on math and problem solving skills. In the competition, four students sit around a table, and a card is placed in front of them. Four numbers are on the card, and it is up to the students to combine those numbers by any means (adding, subtracting, multiplication, division) to come up with the number '24'. The first person to do so taps the card; if correct, they keep that card. At the end of 20 minutes, the student with the most cards wins the round.



Proctors administer the Math24 game to students at the county championship.

For example, on a card with the numbers nine, three, two, and seven, a correct answer would be: seven minus two equals five; five multiplied by three is fifteen; fifteen plus nine equals 24. $[(7 - 2) \times 3] + 9 = 24$. Cards vary

by difficulty: they can have single or double digits.

"I love this game, and I'm so pleased with the intrinsic motivation it provides for students to learn their math facts and master basic mathematical skills," says Alexander II Magnet Lead Math Teacher Jennifer Doss. "It is exciting to see the mental math ability demonstrated along with the smiles and pride their success brings."

As Doss tells the students filling Porter Elementary's gymnasium to begin, proctors flip their first cards and hands dart forward almost instantaneously (no slapping of the cards allowed) to be the first to give the solution. A quiet buzz grows as students begin rattling off their equations and quietly celebrating their growing piles of cards.

"The students love the game!" exclaims Porter Elementary Principal Donna Jackson. "It requires a lot of critical thinking and math knowledge that is done strictly from their heads. I am extremely impressed every time I watch these students compete."

According to Doss, there is also an online version of the game at www.firstinmath.com. Here, they can compete with students across the nation, and Alexander II's Obi Ndubuisi is the top player in the state and ranked fifth in the nation out of approximately 300,000 online players.

The winners from the county competition will move on to the state level in early May. Last year, Bibb County was well-represented at the state level when Hartley Elementary students Lorenzo Sanford won 1st place in the 4th grade division and Shasta Brown won 2nd in the 5th grade (she also won 2nd in the 4th grade the year before that).

4th grade winners were (1st through 6th): Hartley Elementary's Jalecia Jones and Jessica Whipple, Springdale Elementary's Daniel Zhu and Sam Bechtel, Hartley's Vernsheka Jolly, and Springdale's Cole Chazman. 5th grade winners were (1st through 6th): Hartley's Shaaira Palmer, Jakessa Mays, and Jaquise Mays, Carter Elementary's Zondria Bond, and Alexander II's Alexis Gundy and Katelyn Grandison.

Reader's Cup

Before Heritage Elementary Principal Dr. Kaye Hlavaty can finish reading the question, a student has buzzed in, ready with the answer. Rarely a question is answered incorrectly, so the game has come down to who can get to their buzzer first.

It's the first-ever Bibb County Reader's Cup, and the teams of four facing across from each other have worked their way up from the classroom to be seated here at Heritage in a double-elimination tournament. "These are some excited and motivated kids," says Heritage Media Specialist Tina Graham.

At a Media Specialist Conference last school year, she was introduced to the Helen Ruddin Reading Bowl, a competition for 4th through 12th graders focusing on 'chapter books'. Coming back to Bibb County, she wanted to start a competition for Kindergarten through 3rd graders. Books are chosen from the Georgia Picture Storybook Award Nominees, a 20-book list released each year. This first year, the competition was only open to 2nd graders, and participating schools included Bruce, Riley, Porter, Burdell-Hunt, Morgan, and Heritage Elementaries.

Begun in the classroom, teachers read the books to the children, then incorporated them into the lessons, talking about plot, details, characters, and other literary devices. Each student took a written quiz ("once they started taking the quiz, [the excitement] began to set in," says Graham), and the top four scorers earned a place in the school's Book Bee. Here, in a similar format to a school-wide spelling bee, they were individually tested on their knowledge of the books. The top six finishers



Heritage Elementary Principal Dr. Kaye Hlavaty moderates the first Bibb County Reader's Cup.

made up the school's team of four with two alternates.

Working through a rotation of questions for each book (so none are repeated), teams faced off in the Quiz-Bowl style tournament, hoping to answer the most questions correctly. The winner on this day will take home a plaque - which the school will keep - and a large trophy which will travel among the schools each year, depending on who wins.

In the final rounds, Porter and Burdell-Hunt came head-to-head, fingers jerking down to buzz in, answers given with confidence, and cheers throughout the Media Center. At the end, though, only one could be called champion, and Burdell-Hunt Elementary will be the first school to proudly display their trophy as the Bibb County Readers' Cup Champions.