

BELL Scholars Society

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WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

DESEA ESTE BOLETIN INFORMATIVO EN
ESPAÑOL? LLAME AL 617-740-0454

www.bellnational.org/alumni

www.facebook.com/BELLScholarsSociety

Connect with the BELL Scholars Society on Facebook!

Want to see **up-to-the-minute resources** related to your scholar's education, **share tips** with other BELL families, or see **photos and videos** from BELL Scholars Society events? **Then join our community on Facebook.com!**

STEP One: Connect to the BELL Scholars Society by adding "Gillian at BELL" as a friend.

1. Go to www.facebook.com/BELLScholarsSociety
2. Log into facebook using your existing account or by creating a new one: "Sign Me Up" (if you don't yet have an email address, you can create one in less than 2 minutes at www.gmail.com or www.hotmail.com)

3. When my page comes up "Add Me As A Friend."

STEP Two: Interact with other BELL Scholars Society Families at the BELL Scholars Society group

1. Once you've added me as a friend, I will invite you to the BELL Scholars Society group. Or, you can search for it yourself and then hit "Request to Join Group"
2. Use the Group page to post comments or ideas on the Wall, or start a Discussion Topic



Visit <http://www.facebook.com/BELLScholarsSociety> to connect with "Gillian at BELL" and then get access to the BELL Scholars Society group (above)

STEP Three: Enjoy the benefits of your connection

1. I will be posting links, tips, and important dates and events regularly; you will be the first to see them!
2. You can also see "Videos" from previous events and even photos of some of your scholars! *(Everything is privacy protected!)*

6th Grade BELL Scholars Society Bulletin

For 6th Grade Scholars and their Families

OH NO! DID WE GET YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, OR GRADE WRONG? IF SO, CALL US AT 617-740-0454 OR EMAIL ALUMNI@BELLBOSTON.ORG TO CORRECT THE MISTAKE.

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BELL Alumni Learn that COLLEGE STARTS NOW

On December 3rd, BELL alumni and families assembled at UMASS Boston to learn that *college starts in middle school*. After listening to a lively discussion between college experts and current college students, families learned the ins and outs of paying for college while scholars participated in a fun goal-setting workshop. Some of the things we learned:

Why is it important to go to college?

- People who attend college make **\$1 million more** over the course of their lifetime!
- College **changes the way you think**. Students talked about the classes they took that gave them more wisdom about themselves and the world.
- College is **fun!** In college, you take only the classes you want to take and have the **independence** to choose your own schedule and your own activities.

Why should scholars start preparing for college in middle school?

- Colleges accept students who take challenging classes in core subjects (algebra, geometry, English, science, foreign lan-

guage) during high school. Students won't be ready for these classes unless they **push themselves in middle school!**

- Our admissions officer (from Skidmore College, a highly selective college in NY) noted that colleges look for students who are active outside of school; who are leaders in their community, give



Our panel of college access experts discuss how to plan for college early. For the full video, visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/BELLScholarsSociety

(see more about Facebook on Pg. 4)

back to their families, or participate in arts, music, or sports. Now is the time to pursue your passions, so you can stay active during high school.

- Getting to college requires the support of guidance counselors, teachers, and mentors to help with the application, write recom-

mendations and offer advice on choosing schools. **Start building relationships with helping adults now!** You can also meet college application professionals at TERI College Planning Centers (www.tericollegeplanning.org)

How can I afford college?

- Know the **true costs** of college. It's not just tuition, but room and board, books, and transportation.
- Start **saving now!** Organizations like MEFA (www.mefa.org) offer early savings plans.
- **Learn everything you can about financial aid and scholarships.** To get financial aid, scholars must work with their parents to fill out a financial aid form, called a FAFSA, in 12th grade. Additionally, outside scholarships are available. For example, ACCESS (www.accessboston.org) is the largest provider of scholarships in Boston! The BELL Scholars Society will also be providing college scholarships (see Pg. 3 of this newsletter).

Winter 2010

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Applause for our "College Starts Now!" Event:

"Great panelists! Awesome connections and relevant info." -parent

"I had a great time." - BELL scholar

"I wish I had this information years ago for my senior who is heading to college this fall." - parent

"I now truly understand why it is important to go to college." -scholar

"BELL should have this event every year" - parent

The BELL Scholars Society Is Now Offering Scholarships

To help your family offset the costs of school supplies, tutoring services, and yes, even college, **The BELL Scholars Society will be awarding up to 50 scholarships a year exclusively to BELL scholars!** We will be rolling out our scholarship application by March 1, 2010 with award values and details about how to apply. In the meantime, here is a guide to the types of scholarships we will offer:

1. **Goals Scholarships:** Thoughtful goal-setting is key in enabling scholars to reach their goals.

Scholars who complete our Individualized Achievement Plan (IAP) laying out their goals will be eligi-

Check your mailbox in the next few weeks for more information about our scholarships!

ble for these scholarships.

2. **Program Scholarships:** After school and summer programs help scholars succeed in school and develop positive behaviors. Scholars who participate in structured programs with adult mentors are

eligible for these scholarships.

3. **College Scholarships:** We will be awarding scholarships directly for college! Scholars who complete our full College Scholarship application, including essays and recommendations, will be eligible for these awards.

Read this newsletter? If so, send an email with your full name, your phone number, and the title of your favorite article to alumni@bellboston.org. Any BELL scholar or BELL guardian who sends us this email will be automatically entered to win a \$200 Target Giftcard!

Scholar Spotlight: Q & A With Alex Ervin

Every newsletter, we will feature an outstanding BELL alum in our "Scholar Spotlight." This month, our Program Manager, Gillian Pressman, sat down with 6th grader Alex Ervin!

Gillian: What activities are you involved with after school?

Alex: I do Homework Club through my school and go to the Boys & Girls Club. There I do a lot of technology stuff, like working with Photoshop and doing projects. I also play football for the Pop Warner Football League. Our team, the Brookline JP Patriots, has won both the state and national championships. I play tight end.

G: What are three things you are very good at?

A: Sports. I play football, I'm good at basketball, and I'm kind of good at soccer. I also am good at science and math.

G: What is your favorite subject in school?

A: Science. We've been doing Electricity in school. We are learning about voltage and electrical safety. Like, not to put a paper clip in an outlet, because you'll kill yourself.

I like Electricity. Although, I like Magnetism better.



Alex is an 11-year-old BELL scholar. He is a talented football player and is great at science and math.

Photo: Alex at the BELL Scholars Society's September 2009 Back to School Barbeque

G: What do you want to be when you grow up?

A: A criminologist. There are different kinds of criminologists. Some study the behavior of criminals. Some of them investigate crimes. And some of them work with criminals; not bad, just like helping them when they are in jail. I want to be the kind that studies their behavior. It sounds cool.

G: Who is your favorite music artist

or actor right now?

A: I like Will Smith. He's funny and he's in the type of movies I like. Which are movies that have "not real" things in them. Movies with robots and aliens and stuff. Although, I guess some robots are real.

G: What is one goal you have for the rest of the school year?

A: To finish my homework faster. To do that, I would have to understand it better. The people at Homework Club can help with that, and I can get a tutor in my school.

G: What is one challenge you faced in the last year and how did you overcome it?

A: ELA [English Language Arts]. I had to write a piece. To overcome it, I started seeing someone to help me with it (the Literacy Specialist at my school). I then had to get a strategy for how to do it. The hardest part of writing was starting it. I had to get a strategy to figure out how to start a piece. After that, it was easier.

Do you know an outstanding scholar? Email us at alumni@bellboston.org or call (617) 740-0454.

THIS MONTH'S FOCUS: SCHOOL CHOICE

The final half of 6th grade has just begun, and many families are taking this time to evaluate or re-evaluate their school choices. If your scholar is moving to a new school next year or you are considering transferring to a different school, **now is the time to prepare!**

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

Public schools • Pilot public schools • Charter schools • Private schools Have you considered all? Your scholar has a wide-range of

- * After school programs available
- * Opportunities for parent involvement
- * Graduate services (does the school help scholars prepare for the next step; i.e. high school, college, or vocational school?)
- * School culture. Are students expected to work hard? Do teachers believe that students will succeed?

with lots of offerings or just the traditional ones? How important is it to you that the teams do well in city or state championships? Do you want a school where only a small group of students participate in sports, or a school where everyone plays a sport?

4. Do you want a school with a gym? A library? A pool? A computer lab?

5. Racial diversity; is it important to you that there are many students of color at your school? Do you want a school with student groups for students of color?

***Record your scholar's answers and refer back to them as you make your school choices!**

Both Boston-area high schools below admit students regardless of grades, test scores, or income. However, look at the difference!

SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
99% of students passed ELA MCAS	77% of students passed ELA MCAS
93% of students passed Math MCAS	66% of students passed Math MCAS
3% student drop out rate	16% student drop out rate

choices, and most of them are free or give out financial aid!

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SCHOOL?

We recommend you look carefully at your scholar's school to see whether it will prepare your scholar for the demands of college and the workplace. Some factors to consider:

- * MCAS scores and AYP status (does the school prepare its students to meet national and state standards for math and reading?)
- * Core curriculum and courses (are students challenged by their classes?)
- * Support services for students who need extra help



QUIZ YOUR SCHOLARS: WHAT DO THEY WANT IN A SCHOOL?*

1. Do you want a small school (around 50 students per grade), a big school (300 or 400 students per grade), or somewhere in between? If you consider the pros and cons of each (i.e. more students and teachers vs. smaller class size and closer relationships with teachers), which wins out?

2. Do you want a strong arts program? A strong music program? A strong computer or technology focus? A chance to learn a career or technical skill? What other passions do you want to be able to pursue?

3. Sports: Do you want a school

HOT LINKS

For more on school choice, see our website at www.bellnational.org/alumni

For more on Boston Public School options, see <http://bostonpublicschools.org>

For more on Charter Schools, visit each school's website. See <http://charterschoolsboston.com> for a list

For more on private schools (YES, you CAN afford them!), see www.aisne.org