

Press Release

: “THE WORLD AROUND US”

Guy H. Benjamin Elementary School’s new afterschool program!

Summary:

The Guy H. Benjamin Afterschool Program, “The World Around Us”, has begun. It is in session Monday through Thursday from 3:30 to 5:15 and offers a wide range of both academic and extracurricular activities for children in grades K-6. Transportation and snacks are provided too. The program is funded through a multi-year grant from the US Department of Education’s 21st Century Community Learning Center Program. The \$100,000 grant for this school year was received after a competitive grant application was written by Guy Benjamin School and its partner in the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program – the Coral Bay Community Council. It is anticipated that continuing funds will be received each year for five years – with local resources --families, government and the community --making the program sustainable on a long term basis.

Each day provides 45 minutes of enrichment in reading, math, recreational and cultural activities, creative writing, counseling, mentoring and team sports. The students are able to make choices, based on interest, as to which extracurricular activity they will participate in. The St. John School of the Arts is partnering to provide a broad curriculum of activities including Yoga, Drama, Quilbe and Drumming.

There are 75 children participating. The program began February 16 and will run this year until May 27, 2010. It is hoped more funding will allow it to run the entire 2010-2011 school year. Both children and parents are very excited about the program. Most of the regular school teachers are working in the program, as well as some community members and paraprofessionals. Time is also being donated by some parents and others.

Approximately once a month there will be a program of parental and general interest. And as the program matures, parents and community members will be asked to provide feedback for improvements and additions. We are especially interested in program comments and suggestions for parents and families. In May there will be an Open House showcasing all the things the children have learned within a few months’ time. Local businesses will be asked to donate the refreshments for these events.

“The World Around Us” is seeking to develop the whole child by exposing each child to experiences both in and outside the immediate environment. This philosophy enables us to better meet our objectives to improve students’ performance both academically and socially. This program will also encourage parental involvement in student activities, growth and development. As a result, the education process will provide opportunities for our parents to engage in meaningful training and seminars as well.

Need for the program: With the construction of the Calabash Boom Housing Development, it is expected that there will be a total of 60 families moving into the area. This will result in an increase in the student population of Guy H. Benjamin School as well as the need for activities that extend beyond the normal school day. One hundred percent of the students who attend Guy H. Benjamin School qualify for free and reduced lunch.

With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools are now expected to meet goals set by their respective districts in Reading and Math. Our district has determined how our schools will make increments of improvement in Reading and Math every year. Being held accountable has forced us to look at our data closely and use that information to drive our decision making process. Our goal is to have 100% of our students' proficient or advanced in Reading and Math by 2015. The standard set by the District for 3rd – 6th grade for school year 2008-2009 was to have 37.7% of our students' proficient or advanced in Reading and 38.4% of our students' proficient or advanced in Math. For 2009-2010 those benchmarks have risen to 53.3% proficient in Reading and 53.8% proficient in Math. Guy H. Benjamin has been successful in attaining the cut score thus far and we hope to continue to do so. Meeting students where they are and bringing them to where we want them to be is our biggest challenge. This is one of the main reasons why the After-School Program is so essential.

Additional Enrichment Programming:

In meeting the district goals for improvement in reading and math, students are placed in small groups and given individual plans for improvement and achievement. The teachers work closely with each student, individually, monitoring their progress daily. Running records are maintained to chart that progress. Those students who are at or above grade level are able to spend their time in enrichment activities to enhance the students own achievement and skill level.

Guy H. Benjamin School Facility:

Guy H. Benjamin School is perfectly equipped to accommodate this after-school program. For this after-school program personnel for academic intervention and enrichment program will mostly be the teachers who work at Guy H. Benjamin School who have committed themselves for specific days. We may need to recruit more teachers from the community but each teacher from Guy Benjamin will already be familiar with students. This will make it easy to identify weaknesses and strengths of students and to monitor progress. The teachers will also be able to provide support and constantly dialog with the teachers. As the program grows, we may have to recruit additional teachers from the community. All classes will be held within the classroom. Each classroom is already equipped with computers, a promethean board, desks and chairs and is air conditioned. We have a fully functional computer lab with 15 desktop computers that can be utilized for technology classes and extended learning. Some of the courses being offered would require outdoor space and we are fortunate to have a field and basketball court adjacent to the school that can be used not to mention the playground space on the facility.

CBCC The Coral Bay Community Council will be responsible for initiating some of the special programs for both students and parents once a month. The Council will help to identify and obtain additional funding resources and aid in sustaining the program long term. The Coral Bay Community Council, as an outside community agency, will be responsible for the written survey document and tabulating and evaluating the survey information objectively, and will seek the detailed feedback at one or more community meetings, from both the community and parents leading to recommendations to improve the program in future years.

For Additional information and to arrange a tour of the program: Please contact Principal Dionne Wells at the Guy H. Benjamin Elementary School at 776-6242. Sharon Coldren of the Coral Bay Community Council may also be contacted for quotes and information – 776-2099