

Thrive update



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Look for us on the web!
www.bvsd.com

>> Homework

Homework is a hot topic in homes throughout BVSD and the nation. Does it positively impact student learning? Are some kinds of homework more helpful than others? How much is too much homework? Or, as Alfie Kohn asks in his book *The Homework Myth*, "What if there was no homework at all?"

"From many families' perspectives, homework is a huge part of the problem of keeping our kids' lives balanced so that they feel free enough to join sports and be involved in other healthy activities, not to mention being able to get a good night sleep every night," writes Will Eiserman, a BVSD parent with a student in middle school. He is not the first parent to voice this concern and BVSD Superintendent Bruce Messinger understands that, "Students have other interests/activities outside of the school day which might limit the time they have to complete homework assignments."

BVSD Board Policy IKB includes similar considerations:

The value of homework and its positive effects on student learning are not primarily a function of the amount of homework assigned. More is not better. Rather, the value of homework is a function of the appropriateness of assignments, their quality, and their relevance to classroom instruction. In designing homework policies, schools should focus their attention on these qualitative issues while insuring that the actual amount of homework assigned considers the needs and demands of family life and the health of students.
<http://www.bvsd.org/policies/Policies/IKB.pdf>

Primary benefits of homework are that it "can reinforce skill development, expand learning opportunities and foster independent work" explains BVSD Superintendent Bruce Messinger. On the other hand, Dr. Messinger acknowledges, "Homework can have a negative impact if students are unable to do the work independently which could lead to frustration and impact motivation."

"As educators we need to be thoughtful about the homework assigned to students so the desired outcome is achieved." says Dr. Messinger.

In his work as a psychologist with families in the Boulder area, "Homework is quite often a source of conflict between parents and children," says Dr. Jan Hittelman. "Issues like when they do their homework, the quality of the homework done, and their keeping up with assignments, are usually what fuel these conflicts at home."

If students are struggling with homework, Dr. Messinger suggests parents visit with the child to gain a full understanding of the concern.

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>> Homework (cont.)

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"The concern could be based on the difficulty of the assignment, time needed to complete the homework assignments or the student might be experiencing an extensive burden because of additional homework assignments from other teachers," says Dr. Messinger. "Parents and students should meet with the classroom teacher(s) and seek resolution. If the concern cannot be resolved by the classroom teacher, parents should make contact with the school administrator and strive to find a resolution to the concern."

Dr. Hittelman suggests the following to parents to help develop successful habits around homework:

- Try to help your child develop a regular time and place to do their homework
- After some time to decompress right after school, encourage your child to complete their homework before engaging in leisure pursuits, using them as rewards for completing their work.
- Help your child with homework only if asked
- Let the child take ownership of homework, not the parent, and if they don't get it done, let the classroom teacher(s) address it.

Dr. Hittelman questions whether homework should be assigned at all, though, or at least in the current quantities.

"While we are creatures of habit and have been assigning homework forever, we need to embrace what research has consistently told us and rethink giving homework altogether," says Dr. Hittelman, who suggests "that at the end of each lesson, teachers give students a brief quiz to ascertain which students need more review of the concepts taught. I believe that if students knew that passing the quiz would result in no homework, we would find more students attending to the lesson in school and thus rarely requiring homework at all."

"The idea that homework must be assigned is the premise, not the conclusion -- and it's a premise that's rarely examined by educators," writes Alfie Kohn in *The Homework Myth*.

by Maela Moore
BVSD Communications Manager

>> Got Effective Coping Skills?

When considering someone's emotional well-being, a key contributor is one's ability to effectively cope with adversities. Whether these are academic, familial, social, physical, or emotional, it is how we respond to these challenges that determines our overall psychological adjustment. Consider two children being on the losing team of an important tournament. One child may get angry, feel the results were unfair, and blame others on the team, all the while fueling anger and resentment, eventually resulting in negative behavior and emotion. The other child, while feeling very disappointed, rationalizes that it's only a game and tries to learn from mistakes made for the future. While it's the same situation, their very different coping skills result in very different responses. Everything from school success to significant psychological disorders like depression and anxiety are directly impacted by one's ability to cope with adversity. Similarly, substance abuse, physical violence, and temper tantrums are examples of poor coping skills.

Luckily, effective coping skills can be modeled and taught. Consider these examples of effective coping skills:

- **Problem Solving:** Effective problem solving uses the following steps: Identify the problem, brainstorm as many possible solutions to the problem as you can, consider the probable consequence of each solution generated, choose the most effective solution, implement the best solution, evaluate the results, did it solve your problem? If not, try the next best solution.
- **Stress Management:** Whether it's yoga, exercise, breathing techniques, or simply going for a walk, learning to manage stress is key.
- **Assertive Communication:** Expressing your feelings in a diplomatic and respectful way can both reduce a build-up of negative emotions and enhance relationships.
- **Healthy Thinking:** As highlighted by the sports example above, our unhealthy thinking often fuels our negative emotions. Being aware of our thoughts and putting effort into focusing on the positive while challenging negative thoughts can make a big difference.

Evaluate your child's coping skills, as well as your own, and put effort into enhancing your family's ability to effectively respond to the daily challenges of life.

by Dr. Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist

>> Looking for Spring Break Camps for your child?

BVSD Lifelong Learning is offering a variety of fun and creative camps over Spring Break:

- **African Safari Art Camp** (Ages 7-11) at Aspen Creek K-8
- **Fashion Runway 1: Medieval Fashions Art Camp** (Ages 7-11) at Aspen Creek K-8
- **Fashion Runway 2: Art Camp** (Ages 7-11) at Flatirons Elementary
- **Horse Drawing Art Camp** (Ages 7-11) at Flatirons Elementary
- **Science Matters: Mystery Science Grab Bag** (Ages 6-10) at Flatirons Elementary
- **Outlands Jedi Academy Camp** (Ages 6-12) at Platt Middle School
- **Acting Workshop** (Ages 7-12) at Platt Middle School
- **Intro to Bouldering Climbing Camp** (Ages 6-8) at The Spot Gym in Boulder
- **Intro to Bouldering Climbing Camp** (Ages 9-12) at The Spot Gym in Boulder
- **iShow for Boys and Girls** (Ages 9-12) at YWCA of Boulder

We're also offering **Drivers Education** courses during Spring Break.

For more information about all of our Lifelong Learning classes, visit us at www.bvsvd.org/LLL or call Ivy Lee at 720-561-5968.



>> The YMCA of Boulder Valley Summer Opportunities

The YMCA believes the values and skills learned early on are vital building blocks for life. Because of the Y, more young people in neighborhoods around the nation are taking a greater interest in learning and making smarter life choices. At the Y, children and teens learn values and positive behaviors, and they can explore their unique talents and interests, helping them realize their potential. That makes for confident kids today and contributing and engaged adults tomorrow.

The Y is the starting point for many youth to learn about becoming and staying active, and developing healthy habits they'll carry with them throughout their lives. And the benefits are far greater than just physical health. Whether it's gaining the confidence that comes from learning to swim or building the positive relationships that lead to good sportsmanship and teamwork, participating in sports at the Y is about building the whole child, from the inside out. Overnight, day or specialty camps at the Y share one thing: they're about discovery. Kids have the opportunity to explore nature, find new talents, try new activities, gain independence, and make lasting friendships and memories. And, of course, it's fun too.



Your family can take part in many Y activities this summer season. As always, Y members can save on these summer activities and will have access to our Arapahoe Center outdoor pool, scheduled to open the end of April!

- **Camps:** Day Camp • Overnight Camp • Sports • LEGO® Camp • Arts Camp • Cycling • Skateboarding
- **Sports:** Volleyball • Golf • Baseball • Soccer • Flag Football • Basketball • Lacrosse • Hockey & Skating
- **Swim:** Summer Swim Team • Swim Lessons

For more information, or to register for YMCA programs, visit www.ymcabv.org. We offer financial assistance for membership and programs to those that qualify. **YMCA of Boulder Valley - One Membership, Two Locations:**

Mapleton Center Y • 2850 Mapleton Ave., Boulder • 303.442.2778

Arapahoe Center Y • 2800 Dagny Way, Lafayette • 303.664.5455

>> Community Connections: A Student Resource Guide

BVSD's Community Connections: A Student Resource Guide can be found at www.bvsd.org/guide. The guide is filled with enriching activities and services that support the health and well-being of children and youth. Categories include athletics, health and support services, camps and classes, tutoring and the arts. Paper copies can be found at schools or you can request a copy in English or Spanish from Marla Riley at 720-561-5250, marla.riley@bvsd.org.

>> BVSD Bike to School Day: Thursday, April 19, 2012

The fourth annual human-powered event celebrates walking and biking to school as a way to take part in daily physical activity that is fun and refreshing, and good for the Earth.

This year's event will be simple and fun, a day all students and staff will enjoy. All registered participants will receive:

- A free school lunch!
- A chance to win prizes: **a new bike**, helmets, bike lights, bike tube bags, bells, and more.
- The school with the most registered participants, based on percentage, will be awarded a **RUSH Bowl Party!**



BVSD Bike to School Day registration opens on Wednesday, April 4 at BVSD.org/TOSchool. Be part of the FUN!

Thank you to our partners: BVSD TOSchool Transportation Department, BVSD School Food Project, Cateye, Community Cycles, Pedal to Properties, GO Boulder and RUSH Bowl.

>> When I was a Kid

When I was a kid, I was never driven to school. My parents had two cars and my mom didn't go to work. She could have driven the three of us children to school but I doubt that it crossed her mind. Parents didn't do that back then, but now they do.

On three warm October days, BVSD Transportation did a tally of student trips to and from school. Of the 19,335 trips recorded over those three days, we found that 7,734 (40 percent) were by family car, 6,187 (32 percent) by walking or biking and the remainder by school bus. It's great that 32 percent of our kids walk or bike to school in warm weather; how can we get more kids to bike or walk year-round?

I manage a number of Safe Routes to School federal grants that seek to encourage biking and walking to school. Through my work on these projects I have learned that some parents treasure the time they have with their children in the car during the school commute.

I've also learned that being driven to school takes away the opportunity for the fresh air and exercise kids need to properly wake up their bodies and minds for school. Also, as more people drive their kids to school, the areas around the schools are more congested and associated pollution is concentrated in front of the schools. If you drive your child to school, consider dropping them off a block or two from school so that they can get what a little exercise and fresh air before the school day begins.

Elementary school children are the perfect age to form lifelong habits and values. Middle school children are the perfect age to develop more independence of thought and action. Let's support them in taking some of the responsibility and effort of getting themselves to school in a healthier way.

by **Peter Hurst**
Interim Student Transportation Coordinator
Boulder Valley School District - Transportation Department

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

MARCH 2012

Monday, March 5, 7-8 p.m.

Impacts of Medical Marijuana

Pathways to Parenting Success Series - Live from the BVSD Board Room!

BVSD Ed Center Board Room - 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

Join us as we take on this controversial topic and discuss the impacts of medical marijuana on children, families, and the wider community. **Guest panelists: Linda Cain, MEd, Avani Dilger, LPC, CACIII, Leland Johnston, MD.** Join the live audience in the BVSD Board Room, watch it on Comcast Cable Channel 22, or stream from your computer at <http://bvsd.org/BV22/Pages/PathwaystoParentingSeries.aspx>. Go to BPSBoulder.com for more info.

Thursday, March 8, 7-9 p.m.

The Gift: LD/ADHD/High Functioning Autism Reframed

Fairview High School, 1515 Greenbriar Blvd., Boulder

Presenter: Jonathan Mooney, National Speaker and Author

Often students with learning disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) as well as High Functioning Autism (HFA) struggle in traditional school settings. Emerging brain research suggests that many students labeled LD/ADHD/HFA have gifts for creative and visual thinking that go unrecognized in academic environments. As a result, many bright and gifted labeled students spiral in a devastating pattern of academic failure, learned helplessness, and low self esteem.

This presentation is for parents, teachers and administrators. **Educators interested in Continuing Education Credit need to sign up through Avatar and enter code 3462.5110.** Sponsored by BVSD Office of Advanced Academic Services, Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented, and Parent Engagement Network. Registration requested at www.PENBV.org/mooney. Questions? Contact Kathy, valstone2@hotmail.com. Requests for childcare may also be placed at that site.

Thursday, March 15, 6-8 p.m.

College Life - Resource fair and panel of students, parents and student service specialists from area colleges will share stories and success of post-secondary education.

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe Rd., Boulder

Part of the *On the Road: Transition to Adulthood Series for Students with Disabilities*. Co-sponsored by Boulder Valley School District and Association for Community Living in Boulder County, Inc. **Youth are invited to attend. We will have some concurrent sessions for them in the next room led by staff from the Center for People with Disabilities. Youth cannot be dropped off.** For more information, contact BVSD Parent Liaison Anna Stewart at 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@bvsd.org or ACL Executive Director Ailsa Wonnacott at 303-527-0888 or awonnacott@aclboulder.org.

THRIVEupdate for BVSD Parents

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Look for us on the web!
www.bvsd.com

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

MARCH 2012

Monday, March 19, 6:30-8 p.m.

Fathers Matter

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

A Pathways to Parenting Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

Learn about the important role that fathers play in their children's lives and how fathers can connect more deeply.

Facilitated by Dr. Trevor Graham. www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

Wednesday, March 21, 6-8 p.m.

20th Annual Impact Awards

Boulder Theater, 2032 14th St., Boulder

Impact on Education recognizes individuals in the BoulderValley School District who have an extraordinary impact on student learning through innovative teaching skills, exceptional job dedication, and inspirational leadership. To

purchase tickets visit www.bouldertheater.com. For more information visit: www.impactoneducation.org.

Wednesday, March 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

PEN Event - Natural Highs

New Vista High School, 700 20th St., Boulder

Research-based alternatives to risky behavior; Tools for parents and youth.

Presenter: Avani Dilger, Med, CAC III, Creator of the Natural Highs Program. www.parentengagementnetwork.org

APRIL 2012

Monday, April 2, 7-8 p.m.

Parenting through Divorce

Pathways to Parenting Success Series - Live from the BVSD Board Room!

BVSD Ed Center Board Room - 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

Utilizing effective proven parenting strategies can make all the difference in minimizing the negative impact of divorce.

Learn how to help your child. *Panelists: Harmony Barrett Isaacs, LPC, Heremy Dion, LPC, Dan Fox, LPC and Kat Austin,*

LPC, LAC. Join the live audience in the BVSD Board Room, watch it on Comcast Cable Channel 22, or stream from your computer at <http://bvsd.org/BV22/Pages/PathwaystoParentingSeries.aspx>. Go to BPSBoulder.com for more info.

Wednesday, April 18, 7-9 p.m.

Voices of the Gifted: Compelling Stories of Growing Up Gifted

Southern Hills Middle School, 1500 Knox Drive, Boulder 80305

A diverse panel of gifted adults will share personal stories and answer questions about their experiences with school, family, and how their upbringing has affected them on their journey from childhood to adulthood. More information

at www.bvgt.org or programming@bvgt.org.

Thursday, April 19, 6-8 p.m.

Adult Services - Representatives from the Imagine! organization will walk us through the world of waivers, wait lists, social security access, eligibility requirements, timelines and more.

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe Rd., Boulder

Part of the *On the Road: Transition to Adulthood Series for Students with Disabilities*. Co-sponsored by BoulderValley School District and Association for Community Living in Boulder County, Inc. *Youth are invited to attend. We will have some concurrent sessions for them in the next room led by staff from the Center for People with Disabilities. Youth cannot be dropped off.* For more information, contact BVSD Parent Liaison Anna Stewart at 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@bvsd.org or ACL Executive Director Ailsa Wonnacott at 303-527-0888 or awonnacott@aclboulder.org.

Thursday, April 26, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Impact on Education - Classroom Innovation Grant Showcase

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder

Join us for this event that gives our excellent BVSD teachers the opportunity to showcase their innovative projects funded by this year's Impact on Education's Classroom Innovation Grant program. www.impactoneducation.org.

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

APRIL 2012

Thursday, April 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

PEN Event - What's Mental Health Got To Do With It?

Fairview High School, 1515 Greenbriar Blvd., Boulder

Presenter: Marya Hornbacher, National Speaker/Author

One woman's story of healing and recovery from anorexia, bulimia, and addiction. Collaborative with Interfaith Network on Mental Illness (INMI). www.parentengagementnetwork.org.

Monday, April 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

PEN Event - The Minds of Boys and Girls

Centaurus High School, 10300 S Boulder Rd., Lafayette

Presenter: Michael Gurian, National Speaker/Author

Helping our sons and daughters do their best in school and life. Collaborative with Parent Information Network (PIN) www.parentengagementnetwork.org.

Monday, April 30, 6:30-8 p.m.

Caring for Yourself as You Care for Your Baby

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

A Pathways to Parenting Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

Learn how to prepare for healthy postpartum self-care.

Presenters: *Harmony Barrett Isaacs, LPC and Caitlin Flood Moore, MA.* www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

MAY 2012

Saturday, May 5, 5:30-10:30 p.m.

A Night Circus...Razzle Dazzle 2012

Community Park in Louisville

Step inside the circus tent, filled with magic to benefit Impact on Education. Enjoy enchanting entertainment, drinks, and food. Meander through a garden of silent auction items, the proceeds to benefit Boulder Valley School District students. Imagine leaping between clouds without falling and knowing your help will secure the dreams of every student as they reach for the stars. For more info or to purchase tickets: <http://auctions.readysetauction.com/impactoneducation/>.

Monday, May 7, 7-8 p.m.

Talking to Your Kids about Difficult Topics

Pathways to Parenting Success Series - Live from the BVSD Board Room!

BVSD Ed Center Board Room - 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

This presentation offers advice and insights in talking to your kids about difficult topics, setting boundaries, and maximizing your communication skills. *Panelists: Feather Berkower, LCSW, Lisa Cech, MA, Dr. Jan Hittelman*

Moderator: Leisha Conners Bauer, MPA. Join the live audience in the BVSD Board Room, watch it on Comcast Cable Channel 22, or stream from your computer at <http://bvsd.org/BV22/Pages/PathwaystoParentingSeries.aspx>. Go to BPSBoulder.com for more info.

Tuesday, May 8, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

10th Annual PEN Celebration

Spice of Life Event Center, 5706 Arapahoe, Boulder. www.parentengagementnetwork.org

>> Rotary Youth Exchange is Seeking BVSD Host Families

In Estonia, a student from the U.S. gets a taste of life in a newly independent nation; in Japan, a South African student makes an earnest, whimsical attempt to eat with chopsticks; in the U.S., a group of students from around the world comes together to help clear dead wood from a beetle-kill forest; and in Finland, a Brazilian student makes a snowman for the first time. Youth Exchange made all of these scenarios possible. Since 1929, students and host families all over the world have had their horizons broadened and their lives enriched by the Rotary Youth Exchange program.

Basic Details

Rocky Mountain Rotary Youth Exchange is seeking BVSD host families for the 2012/2013 school year. Each of Rotary's inbound high school exchange students will become a member of up to three BVSD host families during the academic year. The first family will commonly host the student from the start of school through Thanksgiving break. The student will then join the next host family through Spring Break. The last family will host the student to late June/early July. Host families provide room and board. More importantly, they integrate the student into their family as a member, establishing close relationships that can last a lifetime.

Learn more about Rotary Youth Exchange and about hosting by visiting www.rmrye.org. Please contact Rotary at chairs@rmrye.org with questions or expressions of interest in hosting. If you contact us, we will simply give you facts! Rocky Mountain Rotary Youth Exchange is a 501(c)3 all-volunteer non-profit.

I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.