

*Belle Meade*



*School*

*Handbook*

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*2008-2009*

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**Belle Meade School is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
Belle Meade School welcomes students and staff of every race,  
color, gender, religion, and national origin.**



## **Mission**

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The mission of Belle Meade School is to provide students with an academic learning environment that is holistic in its methods and a model of lifelong learning and sustainable living for them, their parents and the community.

The school serves the transition years of adolescence with an excellent academic program that integrates sustainable living, growing food, caring for one another, and working to create harmony and balance with the land. The school is a place where young people develop self worth and learn empowerment through challenging intellectual and physical activities and where their work is valued and respected.

## **Objectives**

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1. Provide excellent academic education for students in grades six to nine.
2. Guide the students during the transition years of adolescence in a supportive, nurturing environment.
3. Integrate academic excellence and sustainable living.
4. Offer mentoring and shared responsibility by adults and students working together.
5. Foster development of self worth through successful experiences in the natural world.
6. Offer individualized learning to allow students to take charge of their own education.
7. Provide an inclusive, supportive community.
8. Provide diverse situations for students to build relationships with each other and adults.
9. Promote cross-cultural experiences.
10. Create an economically viable merger of farm and school.
11. Prepare the students for success in high school and college.

Daily Schedule and School Year Calendar 2008-2009

*Belle Meade School*

Time	Category	M	T	W	TH	F
8:30-9:15	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores
9:15-9:30	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle
9:30-10:20	Class	Civics 6/7, Math 8/9	Span Intro 6/7, Chem 8/9 Span I 8/9, Earth Science 6/7	Civics 6/7, Math 8/9	Span Intro 6/7, Chem 8/9 Span I 8/9, Earth Science 6/7	Civics 6/7, Math 8/9
10:20-11:10	Class	English 6/7, History 8/9		English 6/7, History 8/9		English 6/7, History 8/9
11:10-12:00	Class	English 8/9, Math 6/7		English 8/9, Math 6/7		English 8/9, Math 6/7
12:00-12:45	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:45-1:45	Class	Nutrition or Projects	Natural Science 6/7, Physical Science 8/9	Music, Art	Nutrition or Projects	Music, Art
1:45-2:45	Class	Physical Education or Horseback Riding		Music, Art	Physical Education or Horseback Riding	Music, Art
2:45-3:15	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores
3:15-3:30	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle	Circle

Fall Trimester  
 Fall Canoe Trip  
 Trimester Dinner  
 Parent conferences  
 Thanksgiving Break

Sept. 2 – Nov. 21  
 Oct. 8, 9 & 10  
 Nov. 20  
 Nov. 21, 24 & 25  
 Nov. 26, 27 & 28

Spring Trimester  
 Spring Break  
 Spring Canoe Trip  
 Trimester Dinner  
 Final Day of School  
 Parent Conferences

March 2 – June 3  
 April 10 – 17  
 May 13, 14 & 15  
 May 28  
 May 29  
 June 1 & 2

Winter Trimester  
 Winter Holiday  
 First Day of School '09  
 Trimester Dinner  
 Parent Conferences

Nov. 24 – Feb. 27  
 Dec. 22 – Jan. 2  
 Jan. 5  
 Feb. 26  
 Feb 27, March 2 & 3

## **Course Descriptions**

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### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math**

This course is designed to enhance students' ability to engage effectively in problem solving, develop creative alternatives for solving problems, and to engage and enhance students' abilities with basic math skills. In addition to our focus on problem solving this class covers basic mathematical operations, decimals, the metric system, basic geometry, data analysis, factors, proportions, ratio, integers, and algebraic equations.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math**

This course builds upon the Math 6 course and provides the student with additional instruction and additional tools for solving problems, helping the student progress as a producer of mathematical solutions. In addition to problem solving this course reviews and enhances the student's understanding of basic mathematical concepts. This class looks further into the order of operations, decimals, the metric system, basic geometry, data analysis, factors, proportions, ratio, integers, and algebraic equations.

### **Algebra I**

This course focuses on problem solving using abstract mathematical concepts and more sophisticated mathematical tools such as functions, solving equations using one or more variables, simultaneous equations, polynomials, factoring, and quadratic equations.

### **Geometry**

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of geometric shapes and their relationships to other geometric shapes. Using a discovery model students explore the process of deduction and proof of claims about the relationships of perpendicular and parallel lines, congruent triangles, similar polygons, and the relationships of circles, arcs, and angles. This course also introduces coordinate geometry and an understanding of the areas and volumes of multiple geometric shapes.

### **Earth Science**

This course uses problem solving to introduce students to the scientific method and to assist their growth in an understanding of the nature of science. This course includes hands-on experiments and explorations to discover the physical properties of many parts of earth systems, atmospheric systems, and the universe. Students will explore the evolution of the earth through the study of geology, the evolution of the cosmos through the study of astronomy, and the study of the weather through scientific observation. The nature of this course will require field trips and hiking on special days and celestial observation during overnights.

### **Natural Science**

This course has elements of biology and earth science. Through explorations of the natural areas around the school—the ponds, pastures, gardens, forests and sky—we will come to see



the farm as a “natural community” and to see human beings as integral and indispensable participants. This class is for younger, incoming students and will emphasize basic classroom skills: taking notes in class, oral presentations, completion of projects and assignments, handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, expository writing, application of basic math, units of measure, and logical scientific investigations. Planned activities include field trips, scientific experiments, ecosystem studies, map reading, map making, and agricultural studies.

### **Biology**

This course uses problem-solving techniques to explore living systems. This course includes a variety of hands-on experiments and challenges students to explore basic life-processes, cellular organization, mechanisms of inheritance, the dynamic relationship between organisms, and the change in organisms through time. As students explore these concepts they will be challenged to grow in their understanding of the scientific method and they will develop a greater sense of belonging to the community of life.

### **Chemistry**

This course uses problem solving to introduce students to the interaction between matter and energy. This course includes many hands-on experiments and investigations involving laboratory equipment, basic elements, compounds, and mixtures. In this class students explore chemical reactions, writing chemical formulas, analyzing chemical equations, the gas laws, phase changes, and types of matter. The nature of this course requires significant understanding of basic mathematics principles and a good understanding of the scientific method.

### **Physical Science**

This class uses problem solving to engage students in the exploration and observation of Newton’s laws, electricity, the electromagnetic spectrum, sound waves, and Einstein’s revolutionary ideas. This class challenges students to grasp the scientific method, apply mathematical concepts to the real world, and recognize the relationship that all physical entities share. Through this class, students will gain a better understanding of the world and how they function within the physical realm.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade English**

This class is designed to develop students’ ability to read both fiction and nonfiction works and to help them improve comprehension of what they read. Students learn how to plan, draft, revise, and edit their own narratives, descriptive writings, and explanatory writings. The curriculum includes the introduction of the five-paragraph essay, exercises in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and use of language to help students develop their skills and improve as writers as well as readers. Students have frequent creative writing assignments.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade English**

This class continues to develop students’ ability to read, comprehend, and analyze fiction and nonfiction writings while adding the reading and comprehension of poetry. Students

further their development in writing by focusing on word choice, organization, style and grammar. The students' expand the use of the five-paragraph essay. Students continue developing their skills and improving as writers and readers with exercises in grammar, spelling, punctuation, use of language, and creative writing.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade English**

This class continues to develop students' ability to read, comprehend, and analyze multiple types of writings. Students increase their skills in writing through planning, writing drafts, revising, and editing their own writings. Students continue exercises in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and use of language as well as learning how to develop a more extensive vocabulary. Students develop interviewing skills and learn to interpret the persuasive strategies of various media formats. Students continue frequent creative writing assignments.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Grade English**

This class introduces students to significant literary works and develops their reading skills to a higher level of comprehension. Students are taught how to use print sources, electronic sources, and databases in doing their own original research. Students develop their writing skills through writing in narrative, literary, expository, and informational forms. Students develop their writing skills through grammar and spelling exercises and are challenged to integrate their new knowledge with their existing skills in creative writing assignments.

### **Spanish Introduction and Spanish I**

Introduction to Spanish focuses on teaching conversational Spanish and includes grammar, vocabulary and written Spanish. This class also introduces the student to Spanish and Latin-American culture. In Spanish I students begin to develop communicative competence in speaking, writing, comprehending and reading Spanish and expand their understanding of the culture of Spanish speaking countries. Our main goal in the Spanish classes is to provide a *context* for everything we study. We give attention to grammar and vocabulary in a context of real-life situations, Latino cultures, and the language as a whole. The idea is to acquire a feel for the language, an appreciation of its beauty, and a degree of comfort and confidence in speaking it. Along the way, we learn a lot about the English language as well as Spanish.

### **Civics and Economics**

Civics includes the study of our governments, constitution and the election process. This class allows us the opportunity to understand the electoral process as we follow the presidential election campaign and voting process. We follow a bill through Congress and read our Constitution. This course reviews the Bill of Rights and what our role as citizens actually is. Civics involves the study of other forms of governments around the world so that we might compare and contrast our Democratic government to others. Economics is introduced as a personal budget and expands to world economics and as a source of power and trade for governments and their citizens.

### **Ancient Civilizations**

The history of the development of villages, cities, agriculture and trade up to the 1500s is a study of humankind's evolution. This course includes the study of ancient Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Students create a timeline of historic civilizations as they developed up to the modern era. Students rediscover the ancient philosophies, culture, art and building techniques as we study the characters that are most notable from each area we explore.

### **Art**

Using traditional techniques and emerging technologies, this class emphasizes exploration, analysis, and investigation of the creative process. Students develop technical skills that empower them to communicate ideas visually, developing an understanding of and appreciation for the visual arts. Students explore various two-dimensional and three-dimensional art media, using different expressive and technical approaches. Students study the factors that distinguish artistic styles and that clarify the role of art in culture.

### **Instrumental Music**

The instrumental music program emphasizes basic musical skills for band and orchestra. Students study the elements of music, how to create, and how to enjoy music.

### **Physical Education**

The physical education curriculum includes sports such as softball and flag football, which are played during the physical education class period, as well as hiking, swimming, canoeing, and skiing, which are done as group outings. Students can choose to participate in horseback-riding lessons during the physical education class period.

### **Sustainable Skills**

Sustainable Skills comprise the daily work that sustains our farm, our school and our community. We all take part in this work twice a day: in the morning immediately upon arrival at school and again in the afternoon just before our closing circle time. Farm chores, gardening, keeping our building clean, kitchen duty, and dividing up our harvest from the farm and garden are among the activities at these times. In the process of doing this work, we learn about the needs of animals, about health and nutrition, how to care for trees and vegetable plants, how to maintain a household, , and many other skills that we will rely on throughout our lives whatever our living situation. Students should come prepared to work outside every day in all weather conditions. A hat, good work gloves and boots are essential items that are kept at school.

## **Grading Criteria and Student Evaluations**

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### **Standards of Learning**

Teachers review the Virginia state standards of learning (SOL) for each subject matter while developing the curriculum. We use previously released SOL tests to make sure our students are adequately prepared for the next grade level. We are not limited to Virginia standards of learning which set the minimum requirements for each subject by grade.

### **Original Work**

References are to be given for all research. All assignments must be each student's original work. All sources must be synthesized, summarized or quoted (no "cut and paste!").

### **Portfolios**

Each student keeps a portfolio of work to chronicle his or her progress. The portfolio of the student's work will be displayed at the end-of-trimester dinner. The students are assessed by their performance and production. Parents will receive a written descriptive assessment at the end of the year. The students also assess themselves at the end of each trimester.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are held at the end of each trimester. Teachers review the student's progress with the student and discuss the progress, potential and deficits for each subject matter. Then the teacher and student will meet with the parents. Parents book appointments for one hour per student.

Dates for conferences during the 2008-2009 school year are:

November 21, 24, 25

Feb. 27 & March 2 & 3

June 1 & 2

### **Traits of a Responsible Student**

These guidelines are used to identify the traits of a responsible student for evaluations. The faculty expects the best academic performance, behavior, progress and skill development from each student. Each student will work to embody these traits and evaluate himself or herself accordingly.

Completes all assignments  
Dedicates oneself to the task  
Challenges oneself to achieve  
Works independently  
Works well with others  
Produces attractive work

Completes work in a timely manner  
Plans and manages time  
Cares for materials  
Participates in community projects  
Listens well  
Joins in discussion

**Self Evaluations**

The students evaluate themselves based on criteria for a responsible student (see section on page 9). Each student scores himself or herself for each subject. The faculty then sits with the student to discuss and come to agreement on the final score. This rating system encourages the students to take responsibility for their learning and behavior.

<b>Effort and Quality of Product</b>										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Contributes										
In class										
Homework										
Projects										
Individual										
Group										
Tests & Quizzes										
Papers										

**Subjects**

- A Social Studies
- B Math
- C Science
- D English, Literature, Composition
- E Spanish
- F Art
- G Natural Science
- H Sustainable Skills
- I Physical Expression
- J Music

**Scale**

- 10 Amazing!
- 9 Superior
- 8 Excellent
- 7 Advanced
- 6 Above Average
- 5 Average
- 4 OK
- 3 Mediocre
- 2 Poor
- 1 Negative



## List of Supplies

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Students should be prepared for class with certain supplies. Other supplies should be provided by each student to share with the group.

### **Individual Supplies:**

Lunch in reusable containers  
Refillable water bottle  
Three ring binder  
Pocket folders with brads for three-hole paper  
Notebook paper  
Pencils  
Eraser  
Drawing pencil with soft lead  
Sketch pad (between 8.5 x 11 and 6 x 9 inches)  
Pens  
Colored pencils  
Grid paper notebook for math  
Sharpie  
Scissors  
Glue Stick  
Thumb drive (USB portable storage device, 1 GB minimum)  
Plastic pencil box

### **To Keep at School:**

Air mattress  
Rubber Boots  
Hiking boots  
Indoor shoes  
Sunscreen  
Bathing suit  
Towel  
Hat/cap  
Raincoat  
Warm layers  
Work gloves  
Gloves

### **Supplies for Communal Use:**

Markers  
Box of pencils  
Box of pens  
Box of tissues  
Elmer's glue  
Popsicle Sticks  
Poster Board (5 pieces)  
Printer paper

### **To Bring for Overnights:**

Sleeping bag  
Pillow  
Toiletries  
Change of clothes  
Day hike bag

## **Field Trips**

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Belle Meade School's educational field trips and experiential learning activities are a required and important part of the curriculum. We have easy access to Washington, DC and Shenandoah National Park, among other sites. Some of the trips planned for the school year are two canoe trips, skiing in the winter, hiking Old Rag Mountain, geological studies of Skyline Drive, and visiting the Capital in Washington, DC. Parents will be notified of the details of each field trip in advance and certain outings will require a fee.

We will be hiking Old Rag Mountain our first week of school. Students will be expected to wear appropriate clothing including hiking shoes or boots and to bring a water bottle, bagged lunch, and an appropriate backpack.

The area surrounding the school is rich in geological sites. Our study of geology will take us to several extraordinary spots to include Old Rag Mountain, Skyline Drive and Bull Run Mountain.

Students will learn basic canoe skills as part of our physical expression curriculum. There will be an overnight canoe trip in the fall and again in the spring where students will learn primitive camping skills. They will need camping gear and "dry-bags" for clothes, hats and sunscreen as well as personal items. Details and packing lists will be provided before each trip. These fun-filled canoe trips are an integral part of the community building process and educational curriculum.

Like canoeing, weekly skiing is an important part of our physical expression curriculum. Students will be going skiing at Massanutten Ski Resort every Thursday afternoon from mid January through the end of February. There is a one-time fee that includes six ski-lift passes, ski rental equipment, four ski lessons and transportation. Skiing gives the students an opportunity to reconnect with nature while enjoying the winter slopes.

## **Overnights**

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Overnight stays at school engage students on a more informal level and create a greater sense of community. Overnights include lessons in astronomy, physical science, natural communities and more. Thus overnights are an essential part of our curriculum. Students need to bring an air mattress or some other sleeping pad, a sleeping bag, pajamas, toothbrushes, and other essentials. Please, no gum or any other items not appropriate for regular school activities.

## Student Commitment

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I, \_\_\_\_\_, accept the responsibility of being part of the Belle Meade School Community. I honor myself by assuming the responsibility for my own learning, by coming to class prepared, by contributing to class discussions, and by challenging myself to go beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. This responsibility includes willing participation in sustainable skills, community service and extracurricular activities.

I recognize the needs of others and treat them the way I wish to be treated. As a responsible member of this community I work well with others in groups, sports and community service.

I contribute to the school community by offering my skills and talents. I see where I can participate in the growth and development of our school as a community and to the academic programs at Belle Meade School.

I have a positive, optimistic attitude toward school, academic work and community service. When I have a difference of opinion, I will honor the person with whom I disagree and ask to discuss this matter with him or her and a student or teacher mediator if desired.

I attend school each day. I arrive on time. I am punctual to my classes and commitments.

I appreciate my own worth. I am honest and live with integrity.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Parental Participation**

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Parents are a vital part of our school. They assist in community workdays, transportation of students, school beautification and extracurricular activities. The community workdays are on Thursday (our extended day) and occasional Saturdays. Parents garden, gather wood, tend bees, cook and do other activities. We encourage parents to share their skills and talents.

Parental support for the individual student is crucial. Each student needs to come well rested with completed homework, appropriate clothing, a healthy lunch, and a reusable water bottle daily. Having a healthy breakfast and lunch each day is important to maintain energy levels and to stay focused throughout the day. Please provide the student with a nutritious lunch with protein and fruits or vegetables each day.

Teachers are available to speak with parents by appointment. Parents can reach our teachers by e-mail or telephone. Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled at the end of each trimester to discuss the student's progress. Parents are encouraged to use this time to discuss any concerns with the teachers.

Parents are invited to share in the successes of each trimester at our potluck end-of-trimester dinner and performance. These evenings are scheduled in advance and can be found on the school calendar. You will be reminded of the date in our seasonal school newsletter. End-of-trimester dinners are an excellent opportunity for families to come together and support Belle Meade students.



## **Kitchen Use and Lunches**

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### **Kitchen**

Belle Meade School has a commercial kitchen for community use and special events. The kitchen is often used for school functions. Students, teachers and community need to pay special attention to countertops, sterilizer and refrigerator. The refrigerator is used to store students' lunches and fresh garden harvest.

### **Student Use of the Kitchen and Lunch Areas**

- Students must request permission to use the kitchen.
- Students should only use the food they bring for themselves.
- Students must wash, dry and put away any item used in the kitchen.
- Metal trays and pots are to have a trivet under them because metal discolors the wood counters.
- Wipe countertops with damp (not wet) dishcloth.
- Remove all items from the refrigerator at the end of each week.
- Food should not be left on the counters.
- Clean up the lunch tables after eating.

### **Lunch Time**

Please provide the student with a refillable water bottle and a nutritious lunch with protein and fruits or vegetables each day. It is important that students have a healthy breakfast and lunch in order to maintain energy levels and to stay focused throughout the day. Lunches can be eaten at tables in the tile room or outside on our picnic tables, weather permitting. Below are some suggestions to help choose a healthy lunch.

<b>Healthy</b>	<b>Not Healthy</b>
Water & 100 % fruit juice	Soda & high fructose corn syrup-containing beverages
Whole grain bread	White bread
Homemade	Processed
Whole fruit	Fruit roll ups
Fresh vegetables	Potato chips
Honey	Refined sugar
Natural dark chocolate	Hostess cupcakes
Banana	Energy bar/ granola
Real cheese	Kraft singles
Sliced turkey breast	Spam



## **Attendance and Snow Days**

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### **Attendance**

The school day is 8:30 to 3:30 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and 8:30 to 5:30 on Thursdays. Arriving at the school by 8:20 gives the student time to store belongings and get dressed for chores by 8:30. Please call the school at (540) 987-8970 between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. if your student will be absent. Please schedule doctor and dentist appointments outside school hours whenever possible. Let us know ahead of time when an appointment must be made during school hours.

### **Snow Days**

Teachers and directors will make a decision on road conditions and let families know by phone tree when school is cancelled for snow or ice.

## **Coming and Going**

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Students walk down the driveway and around the sidewalk behind the schoolhouse to enter the building at the tile-floor room. Belongings are stored in lockers. Here students change into boots for chores and into indoor shoes for class. The hillsides at the front and back of the building erode when used as shortcuts.

## **Application and Enrollment Process**

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Please call Belle Meade School at (540) 987-8970 or e-mail [school@bellemeadeschool.org](mailto:school@bellemeadeschool.org) for an application form. The completed form should be sent with a check made out to Belle Meade School for \$50.

Annual tuition is \$10,000. Financial aid is available. Rappahannock National Bank offers reduced interest loans to parents of Belle Meade students. Other expenses include books and field trips.

Some transportation to and from school is available for an additional fee.

## **Staff Biographies**

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### **Executive Directors**

Susan Hoffman, A.B. Smith College, Ed. M. Harvard, Ed. D. Johns Hopkins University, has more than four decades of experience teaching, training teachers, and writing curricula. She has run Belle Meade Day Camp since 1994. She participates in Belle Meade School as a mentor and as an occasional teacher. She enjoys going on field trips.

Michael J. Biniek, B.S. in biology, George Mason University, has both a theoretical and a practical interest in farming. He studies and practices ecological growing of food and animal husbandry. He created a heating system for the schoolhouse and the farmhouse using locally available wood. Mike is involved with the students as a teacher, as a mentor, and through going on trips with the school.

### **Lead Teacher**

Greg Garrison has a B.S. from Arizona State University, a Masters in Education, a Masters in Counseling and a Ph.D. in Philosophical Ethics. His dissertation is a deep-ecology defense of the environment against human abuse of our world. Greg was Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Berry College in Rome, Georgia, an Instructor of Ethics at both Georgetown College and Lord Fairfax Community College, GT Science teacher at Marshall Middle School, Marshall, Virginia, and Lead Research Teacher at Mountain Vista Governor's School before coming to Belle Meade. Greg lived overseas when he studied at Oxford University and brings a varied background of experience to the Lead Teacher position at Belle Meade School.

### **Staff Teachers**

Tanya Amrhein has a B.S. in biology from Virginia Tech and a M.S. in biology from George Mason University. Tanya has taught a variety of subjects to students of all ages in formal and informal settings. She has taught classes at George Mason University; as the naturalist at Bull Run Mountains Conservancy; and to residents and staff as a Fairfax County employee. She brings her wide range of teaching experience to Belle Meade School's English and art classes as well as its horseback-riding program. Tanya is also managing the school's vegetable garden and is a self-described "garden-aholic."

Teresa Boardwine was called to teach at the age of six. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Home Economics and Science and many post graduate hours in education. The most fun she ever had was teaching in Germany for seven years. Europe was a great place to take field trips so Teresa took her class to Paris every year, put on fashion shows and dinners, and sponsored the student union. She taught earth science in Munich and was the eight grade class sponsor. Her years in between have been spent teaching the medicinal use of herbs and she is a registered herbalist with the American Herbalist Guild. She has always been a teacher and is so pleased that she is back in middle school combining both her love for the students and the holistic approach to life that includes being close to the Earth, nature and our food source.

Iris Flores is a native of San Miguel, El Salvador. She moved to the US 14 years ago. She and her husband, who is also from El Salvador, have three children.

Dontez Harris is a musician and a master teacher. He has taught music in public and private school in Washington, DC and Rappahannock for 19 years. He has an uncanny ability to relate to a wide range of students, stimulate their interest, and get them to perform well. He teaches music with gusto and joy. He received his formal education at Howard University and University of District of Columbia. He performs with several groups in a variety of styles: jazz, bluegrass, world beat, gospel, reggae, classical.

Lyt Wood has been a professional arborist, forester and educator in natural history subjects since 1974. He has a B.S. degree in Forestry and Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech. He is the former Rappahannock County Forester and is now the owner of Tree Works, specializing in all kinds of tree care. He has directed the Piedmont Environmental Council's Rappahannock Nature Camp since 1986 and joined the staff of Belle Meade School in 2007 as the Natural Sciences teacher.

## **School Board**

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### **Ralph Bates**

Ralph Bates became a board member in May. He and his wife, Gwen, recently moved to Rappahannock and now live in Huntly. They fell in love with the area during weekend visits with friends over the last 12 years. Nearing retirement, they built a modular, Energy Star-rated home on 5.5 acres. They are helping Belle Meade School develop a business plan, which will assist us as we seek grants and foundation support. Ralph's career spans 45 years in both the public and private sectors working internationally and domestically. Ralph spent seven years with the Peace Corps in Latin America as a volunteer and manager; seven years as Vice President of an international development consulting firm; two years helping to build a greenhouse produce business; five years as Chief Learning Officer/VP of an international IT and management consulting firm and 24 years as an independent management consultant.

### **Katherine M. Christie**

President of Global Communicators, Washington, DC, and a former journalist and long-time public relations professional, Katherine Christie has had an extensive career in fields ranging from politics and private industry to federal government service. As senior press officer at the National Endowment for the Arts, Ms. Christie was responsible for publicizing programs and projects to make the best of the American arts available to the widest audience. As a Washington-based news reporter and columnist, Ms. Christie covered the White House, Congress and government agencies. A co-founder of Global Communicators, Ms. Christie was a Vice President of Edelman Worldwide. She has a B.A. degree, majoring in history, with minors in German and English.

Susan Dienelt

Susan and her husband John relocated in 2006 from Washington, DC to what had been their weekend house in Sperryville down the road from Belle Meade farm and school. Susan Dienelt first met and was impressed by the skills of Susan Hoffman twenty years ago when the Dienelt children were students of Susan Hoffman's at John Eaton Elementary School in DC. Those years Susan Dienelt was a professional volunteer at her children's schools while she worked part-time in the design field.

In recent years she has had her hands happily and deeply immersed in clay as she has developed an intense interest in making functional pottery. She was drawn to the beauty and purity of life in Rappahannock County and because finding beauty in the everyday has been a life quest for her, she built her studio there. She sees using clay to make useful yet beautiful tools for eating as part of the challenge of understanding our relationship to the earth.

Anne Morgan Gray


Anne and her husband Stephen have lived in Rappahannock part time since 1995. The other part of her life is spent in Bethesda, Maryland, where she has a full time psychotherapy practice. Anne became intrigued with Belle Meade Farm for its organic practices and the school for its efforts to anchor cognitive learning and development within the context of the larger natural world. Anne saw the growth of the Belle Meade School and the rapidly growing "Green Movement" as a way to acknowledge the necessity of educating our children and ourselves about living within the awareness of mutual dependencies on all of nature.

Anne's willingness to devote scarce resources of time, energy and money to growing Belle Meade Farm School evolved from understanding the healthy, holding environment it offers children and their families. Belle Meade will nurture the skills of being part of a community and the awareness of mutual interdependency, while also experiencing a challenging academic program. For Anne, it brings together the city and country parts of her life.

Cheri Woodard

Cheri Woodard's career is notable for a lifelong dedication to community service and entrepreneurial success, along with exceptional creativity and a profound respect for people and nature. After moving to Rappahannock County in 1973, she founded Faith Mountain Company and became one of the county's most successful business leaders. After selling the company in 2000, she and her husband, Martin, started their dream business, Long View Gallery in Sperryville. In 2002 she became a licensed Realtor and is currently working with Roy Wheeler Realtors. She brings to Roy Wheeler a deep understanding of the land and people of Rappahannock County.

Cheri is a past president of the Rappahannock County Library and Co-Chairperson of the "Taste of Rappahannock," the major fundraising event for Headwaters, the Rappahannock County Public Education Foundation. She is the treasurer and a board member of the Rappahannock County Conservation Alliance. In her free time, she enjoys hiking in the park, horseback riding and bicycling the beautiful back roads of Rappahannock County.



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**Belle Meade School is located  
approximately 70 miles west of  
Washington, D.C., and about 40 miles  
north of Charlottesville, VA.**

**Belle Meade School welcomes students  
and staff of every race, color, gender,  
religion, and national origin.**

**2 Belle Meade Lane  
Sperryville, VA 22740**

**(540) 987-8970**

**[www.bellemeadeschool.org](http://www.bellemeadeschool.org)  
[school@bellemeadeschool.org](mailto:school@bellemeadeschool.org)**

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