Welcome to Kindergarten at Stephen Bell Elementary!

Dear SBE Families,

Welcome to the **Class of 2039**! It is a profound privilege to help our youngest learners build the foundation for their future success. This is a significant step toward independence for your child, and we are honored to take it alongside you.

At Stephen Bell, we believe in a strong home-school partnership. While you will receive various packets and forms soon, your child's teacher will become your primary partner once classroom assignments are made.

We know the first day can bring a mix of excitement and nerves—we've been there! We both have children and grandchildren who have walked these same halls as Bellbrook-Sugarcreek students. We are proud of the education they received here, and we are committed to providing that same excellence for your family.

Whether we are cheering at a local sporting event, hiking, or baking with our families on the weekend, we are always thinking of our SBE community. We make it a priority to learn names quickly and build meaningful relationships with every student.

We are here for you. Let's make this a year of growth, responsibility, and joy!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Ginger Keeton | Principal

Mrs. Heather Hebrank | Assistant Principal

"Better today than yesterday; better tomorrow than today…"

Kindergarten Quick-Start Guide

📅 Key Dates & Communication

- **August 4: Kindergarten Kick Off event at** SBE from 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- **August 5:** You will receive a message via ParentSquare from the Principals for your child's Kindergarten Orientation date/time.
- **August 10:** You will receive a message via ParentSquare from your child's teacher with an introduction and details about the classroom.
- **The Weekly Chimes:** Check your inbox every Friday for our school newsletter. (Moves to bi-weekly in the second semester).
- **Final Forms:** Please ensure your contact info is 100% accurate here; this is our primary lifeline to you.

🏫 Choosing the Kindergarten Program

Feature	Every Other Day (State Funded)	5-Day Program (Tuition Based)
Schedule	Mon/Thu (Gold) or Tue/Fri (Purple) + assigned Wednesdays	Monday through Friday.
Cost	No tuition.	$3,780/year (or $420/month). Additional time for in-depth instructional discovery.
Instruction	Focuses on core Ohio Standards.	
Specials	PE/Music weekly; others monthly.	All Specials (Art, STEM, etc.) weekly.

🏥 Health & Immunizations

Ohio Law requires that all students have written evidence of immunizations or waiver on file before they can remain in school.

- **The Deadline:** Documentation must be submitted before the first day of school.
- **Required Vaccines:** Polio, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus (DPT), Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR), Hepatitis B, and Chicken Pox (Varicella).
- **Screenings:** Our school nurse conducts vision and hearing screenings during the first semester.
- **Nurse Contact:** Laura Guess 937-848-7831 x5930

🚌 Transportation & Attendance

- **The "Rule of 5":** Be at the bus stop 5 minutes before your scheduled time.
- **Safety First:** We cannot change a student's afternoon transportation without a written note or a call to the SBE (Stephen Bell Elementary) office before 1:00pm for any end of day transportation change
- **Transportation Director:** Lori Smith 937-848-4029.
- **Attendance SBE Secretary:** Kelly Newlon 937-848-7831
    - **Reporting Absences:** Call before 8:05 AM if your child will be staying home. The Ohio Attendance Law is defined in the K-5 Parent Handbook (available at www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us).
    - **Tardy:** Must notify the office if your child is going to be late for any reason
    - **Unexcused:** If we don't hear from you, the absence is marked unexcused.

🤚 How to Get Involved

To keep our kids safe, everyone must sign in at the front office with a driver's license to enter our school.

- **Visitors (No BIB required):** Lunch with your child, attending a school play, or dropping off party items.
- **Volunteers (BIB Background check required):** Helping in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, or assisting at school events during the day.
    - *Cost: $13.95 (Valid for 3 years). Apply at the link in the Parent handbook.*

🎒 The "Big Three" Readiness Skills

While we teach academics, the transition is easiest if your child can:

1. **Manage Personal Needs:** Use the restroom independently and zip/button their own coat.
2. **Follow Directions:** Listen to and complete a simple 2-step instruction.
3. **Identify Items:** Recognize their own printed name and keep track of their labeled personal belongings.

Principal's Pro-Tip

- What's the best thing you can do this summer? Read to your child for 15 minutes every day and practice 'the big walk' to the bus stop or visit the SBE playground.
- Our staff family will handle the rest in August as your team partner!

Kindergarten Readiness: Am I Ready?

School readiness is about the **whole child**—how they move, play, and handle feelings. Use this checklist to see where your child shines and where you can practice this summer.

The Practical "I Can" List

- [ ] I can use the restroom and wash my hands by myself.
- [ ] I can put on my coat and attempt to zip or button it.
- [ ] I can open my own snack containers and water bottle.
- [ ] I can recognize my first name in print.

Social & Emotional Skills

- [ ] I can follow 2-step directions (e.g., "Please pick up your shoes and put them in the closet").
- [ ] I can share toys and take turns with friends.
- [ ] I can stay focused on a single activity (like coloring or a puzzle) for 5-10 minutes.
- [ ] I can separate from my grownups without excessive worry.

📚 The "Power of 15": Reading at Home

Reading aloud for 15 minutes is the single most important thing you can do to prepare your child for Kindergarten. It builds vocabulary and a "growth mindset."

How to be a "Reading Hero" in 3 Steps:

1. **Preview:** Look at the cover. Ask, *"What do you think this story is about?"*
2. **Interact:** Don't just read the words; talk about the pictures! Point to a character and ask, *"How do you think they are feeling right now?"*
3. **Echo:** If your child loves a book, read it again! Repetition is how they learn the "rhythm" of language.

🎨 What We Learn: The Curriculum

- **Literacy (Fundations & Wit & Wisdom):** We focus on "Structured Literacy"—learning the sounds of letters and how they build into stories.
- **Math (Everyday Math):** We use "manipulatives" (items children can touch). We count, we find patterns, and we celebrate the 100th Day of School!
- **Social Studies & Science:** We explore our world, from national symbols to how plants grow in our local community.

📋 Stephen Bell A–Z Reference Guide

Attendance & Absences

- Regular attendance is key to your child's success!
- **To Report an Absence:** Again, call 937-848-7831 before 8:05 AM.
- **ParentSquare:** Once you are connected, we can contact you regarding absenteeism.

Birthdays & Celebrations

- We love celebrating our students! To keep all children safe (and our halls latex-free) -
    - ***No Food: We do not accept edible treats for birthdays.***
    - **Goodie Bags:** Small non-food items (stickers, pencils) are welcome! Please coordinate with the teacher first.
    - **No Balloons/Flowers:** These cannot be delivered to classrooms.
    - **Invitations:** Please do not distribute private party invitations at school.

Clothing & Personal Items

- **Label Everything:** Use a permanent marker on coats, hats, mittens, and backpacks.
- **Lost & Found:** Unclaimed items are donated to Goodwill at the end of each semester.
- **Money:** If sending cash for fees, place it in a sealed envelope labeled with your child's name and the purpose of the payment.

Important Contacts

- **Principal:** Ginger Keeton 937-848-7831 ex5999
- **Assistant Principal:** Heather Hebrank 937-848-7831 ex5998
- **Principal Secretary (Registration/Tours):** Marjorie Horvath 937-848-7831 ex5902
- **School Psychologist (Evaluations/Special Education):** Jenna Sandlund 937-848-7831 ex5910
- **School Counselor:** Rachel Pierce 937-848-7831 ex5911

Safety

- **Bus/Daycare riders:** Students should sit still, talk quietly, and keep aisles clear.
- **Car riders:** Please sign your child out in the office lobby.

🤝 The Principals #1 Priority… Safety

We know the first day of school is a big milestone for you and your child. Whether they are the **Gold**, **Purple**, or **5-Day** program, our staff is stationed at every hallway to ensure they find their way with a smile. We are "Better today than yesterday; better tomorrow than today."

🎒 The First Day "Ready-Set-Go" Checklist

The first day is a big milestone!
Follow these tips for a tear-free transition for both you and your student.

The Night Before

- [ ] **Label the Gear:** Double-check that their backpack, water bottle, and coat have their name written clearly inside.
- [ ] **The "Fit Check":** Have your child practice putting on their first-day outfit, including shoes they can manage independently.
- [ ] **Charge Up:** Ensure your own phone/device is ready to receive that first "Weekly Chimes" email or teacher notification.

The Morning Of

- [ ] **Eat a "Brainy" Breakfast:** A mix of protein and fiber helps them stay focused until lunch/snack time.
- [ ] **The Quick Goodbye:** Once you reach the drop-off point or the bus stop, keep the "goodbye" cheerful and brief. A long, hesitant goodbye can actually increase a child's anxiety.
- [ ] **Trust the Team:** Remember, we have staff at every door ready to walk your child directly to their classroom!

Arrival & Dismissal Prep

- [ ] **Bus Practice:** Practice walking to the stop. Remind your child to look for the school bus and greet the bus driver.
- [ ] **The Sign-Out Rule (during the school day):** If you are picking up your child early (before dismissal), remember to bring your Photo ID to the office.
- [ ] **After-School Plan:** Make sure your child knows exactly who is meeting them or where they are going (bus, car, or childcare) at the end of the day.

💡 Pro-Tip for Parents: The "First Day Photo"

We know you want that perfect photo! To keep the bus loop and car line moving safely:

- **Take the "Porch Photo" at home** rather than at the school door. This allows you to capture the memory without the stress of traffic and crowds.
- **Save the "In-Classroom" visit** for your scheduled August Orientation appointment, where you can take all the photos you like in their new learning space!