



McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

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Homework

by Marcia FitzGerald, MCT Principal

One question parents often ask teachers is, "How can I help my child with homework?" Here is an article from "The Learning Letter" that I think helps answer this question. The teachers at McCarthy-Towne feel that it is important that their students learn to be responsible for their own assignments and be as independent as possible when completing homework assignments. At the same time, many teachers report that when parents arrange for a specific homework time and a quiet work space with no distractions, the students manage their work very well. If you are not sure what your child's teacher's expectations are, please check!

How to Give Help . . . and How Not to Give Help:

Generally, when we think of motivated people who get things done, we think of independence, self-reliance, doing it on your own. But, one of the characteristics of successful students is that they know how to find and use help. Another characteristic is that their families know how to give them the right kind of help.

Help That Your Child Could Do Without:

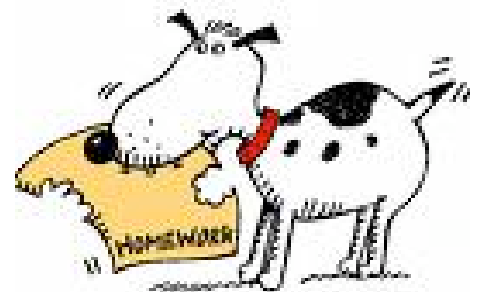
It does little good to give your child help if, in the long run, that help is counterproductive. For example, you say, "Here, let me do it for you." Or, in an even worse scenario, you suggest that most kids would be able to do whatever your child is struggling with, that your child isn't smart enough and then you do it yourself so that the job is done.

The net effect, of course, is that you take the project out of your child's hands--and he or she learns nothing from the activity except that you think he or she doesn't have the needed ability and isn't worth the time that it would take to be shown how to do the work.

Another often used but ineffective form of "help" is to try to "stimulate" your child by saying something like: "You shouldn't make mistakes like that. Go do it right, and don't let me see you again until . . ."

Help That Builds Confidence and Independence:

- Ask your child to explain what sort of help he or she needs. By directing your help, your child maintains control and responsibility for the work. If you take control, your child's motivation to succeed will lessen.
- Show your child where corrections are needed. For example, if your child asks you to correct a report or story he or she has written, you might make a note in the margin where the meaning isn't clear.
- Demonstrate what to do. Model a problem-solving technique on a problem that is similar to the one troubling your child.
- Provide access to reference books. If possible, your home library should include a dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedias appropriate for young people. When buying reference books, involve your child. For example, if shopping for a dictionary, your child could bring along a list of words he or she would like to know the meaning of, and try out the dictionary to see if it's a rewarding source of help.



School Calendar for 2008-2009

The School Committee has approved next year's school calendar. The first day of school will be Wednesday, September 3, 2008. You can check next year's school calendar online at:

<http://ab.mec.edu/about/aboutpdf/schcalendar09.pdf> .

News from the Sloyd Studio

By Heidi Kupferman

If you've passed by the Sloyd room recently, you've seen and heard a flurry of creativity. Our scrap wood collection is growing as children use coping saws, files and hand drills to create an array of projects. Second graders have been working on architectural wood facades, third graders have been carving owls, and fourth graders have been creating wood collages inspired by the artist Jean



Arp. Many students are also discovering the creative possibilities of papier-mâché. The drying shelves are filled with princesses, monsters and fancy felines while the first graders create hand puppets and the sixth graders create Egyptian cats. Be sure to also check out the fourth grade papier-mâché tools inspired by the work of artist Claes Oldenberg hanging next to the glass display cases. Remember to walk slowly and look all around; you never know what amazing art might be hanging from the ceiling or be tucked under a stairwell.

A big thanks to all the parent volunteers who have been willing to get their hands messy and help in the studio. I couldn't do it without you!

Tidbits from Tina

by Tina Morgan, McT School Counselor

More parenting suggestions from [Positive Discipline A-Z](#) by Jane Nelsen:

Tool #7: Create Reasonable Expectations for Yourself

Having a family takes time and energy! Jane Nelsen advises, "When you adjust your lifestyle to allow time for your children's basic needs for love, time, and training, you may not be able to get things done as quickly or effortlessly as you once could. Cut yourself some slack." She also mentions, "You don't have to have designer clothes or vacation in an expensive resort to fulfill your children." Sometimes there are social pressures, especially in towns like Acton, and we need to keep some perspective.

Tool #8: Offer Limited Choices

Children feel a sense of power and control when they can decide things for themselves. It's important to allow them to have some say in their world, so we give them choices. The key to choice is to be sure the options we offer to our children are appropriate and acceptable to us. Jane Nelsen gives some examples: "Would you like to hold my right hand or my left hand when we cross the street?" (note: we don't offer the choice of not holding the parent's hand) or asking the child to choose whether to go to bed at 8:15 or 8:30, or choosing whether to practice the piano or to give up taking piano lessons. Again the parent needs to be sure both choices are acceptable. Adding a "You decide" is a nice way to emphasize the fact that the child is making the decision.

Gift to our Library

The Friends of Acton Libraries gave the McCarthy-Towne School library a gift of \$2,500. Our library will be able to buy 227 new books with this money!

The Friends of Acton Libraries hold used book sales throughout the year and donate the proceeds to Acton and Acton-Boxborough school libraries. Thank you to the Friends and all who support them at the book sales.

Lost & Found Fair

The next Parker Damon Building Lost & Found Fair will be held the week before February break, beginning on Monday, February 11 and ending at noon on Friday, February 15. All items without identifying names will be displayed in the hallway outside the multi-purpose room at the bottom of the main staircase. Any items left at the end of the sale will be donated to local charities.

Please remind your child(ren) to check the fair for clothing and lunch boxes they may have lost. Parents are welcome to check the fair anytime the building is open (about 7 AM - 9 PM on school days). Just remember to sign-in at the office during school hours.

Dates To Remember

Note the following important dates:

February 18 - 22.....NO SCHOOL - Winter Recess
Thursday, Feb. 28..... School Committee Meeting (7:30pm)
Saturday, March 1..... McCarthy-Towne Auction
Friday, March 21.....NO SCHOOL - Good Friday
April 21 - 25..... NO SCHOOL - Spring Recess
Monday, May 26.....NO SCHOOL - Memorial Day
Wednesday, June 25..... Last Day of School (with 5 snow days)



Scrip Gift Card Program

We would like to thank all the families that ordered Scrips in the month of January.

Scrips continues to be a great way to help the school raise money without having to "buy" anything in addition to your usual purchases, so we will continue to offer the Scrip program on a monthly basis until the end of the school year. Attached at the back of the bulletin is the order form with all of the participating vendors. You can also get an order form online, or if a family member would like to order, please go to www.mctptso.org/fundraising/scrip.

The February orders are due on Wednesday, February 13th. Please contact Lynne Densen at lynne.densen@verizon.net or 978.266.2952 or Maureen Jones at maureen.jones1@verizon.net or 978.266.2874 with any questions.

Spring Shopping Day

- Cambridgewear Fundraiser at Acton Woods Plaza (at the intersection of 2A / 27)
- Thursday, May 1, 2008 All day (10am-8pm)
- Come see the new Spring fashions! Just in time for Mother's Day!
- No need to mention MCT: all sales count for 10% to MCT.

Book Gifting

Book Gifting forms went home last week via backpacks! Hopefully you all have had a chance to look over the order form and make your selections. In case "the dog ate it" - the information is also available on the McCarthy Towne website at www.mctptso.org and there is a tab on the far right side labeled "Book Gifting." This site will be updated as the books are selected so should you find the form later, check the website for availability. Contact Joanie Davis with any questions.

Spring 2008 MCAS Test Dates

Parents of students in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6: please note the dates for MCAS testing at your child's grade level and avoid scheduling trips or appointments during school hours.

Tuesday, March 25:

Grades 3, 5 & 6 - Reading Comprehension Session 1
Grade 4 - ELA Composition

Wednesday, March 26:

Grades 3, 5 & 6 - Reading Comprehension Session 2
Grade 4 - Reading Comprehension Session 1

Thursday, March 27:

Grades 3, 5 & 6 - Reading Comprehension Session 3
Grade 4 - Reading Comprehension Session 2

Friday, March 28:

Grade 4 - Reading Comprehension Session 3

Tuesday, May 13:

Grades 3, 4, 5, & 6 - Mathematics Session 1

Wednesday, May 14:

Grades 3, 4, 5, & 6 - Mathematics Session 2

Tuesday, May 20:

Grade 5 - Science & Tech. / Engineering Session 1

Wednesday, May 21:

Grade 5 - Science & Tech. / Engineering Session 2

Thursday, May 22:

Grade 5 - Social Studies Session 1

Friday, May 23:

Grade 5 - Social Studies Session 2



Stay Informed and Voice Your Opinion

On their website, the School Committee urges everyone to “become more knowledgeable about the critical issues that we all face together as the communities of Acton and Boxborough and become actively involved in supporting our public schools.”

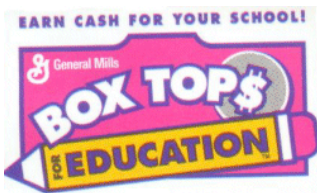
The School Committee is in the process of finalizing next year’s budget. There are two critical issues under consideration – **Technology in the Classroom** and **Class size**. Both of these issues have direct and far-reaching impact on the daily experience and long-term education of our children. We urge all parents to learn more about these issues and to be sure that the School Committee knows how you feel about the importance of both.

Here are some ways to learn more:

- Visit the School Committee website – <http://ab.mec.edu/about/schoolcommittee.shtml>
- Read the minutes from the meetings by downloading the School Committee Packet from recent meetings
- Ask your principal and/or child’s teacher
- Write or talk to a School Committee member

As you explore these issues, remember that teachers and principals are some of our best resources for understanding the educational needs of our children. They know first-hand how class size and technology affect the functioning of their classrooms and their ability to meet students’ educational needs.

And then make your voice heard – go to the next School Committee Meeting – **Thursday, February 28th, 7:30pm at the Junior High Library**. Remember that just being there with lots of other parents tells the School Committee a lot. And if you can speak forthrightly about what is best for our children based on educational standards, teachers’ experience and concrete student needs, then we can be sure that the School Committee hears what parents want for their children.



Box Tops For Education

Keep clipping those box tops!

This December MCT received a check for over \$600.00 just from box tops. Our next collection will be in March, so remember to send in your box tops. For more information see: www.boxtops4education.com

The class that collects the most box tops will win a Friday afternoon ice cream treat.

Did you get a new cell phone, GPS, or digital camera?

Can you help occasionally with our recycling fundraiser?

Now is the time to recycle your old cell phone, GPS system, digital frame or camera, DVDs, DVD player, video game consoles, laptop computer or those inkjet or laser cartridges. Does your or your spouse’s employer provide you with a new cell phone periodically? What do they do with the used ones? McCarthy-Towne sends used printer cartridges and used electronics to a recycling program and earns money for them in return. We gladly accept your or your company’s old cell phones and printer cartridges as well. We can also provide you with a collection box at your office. Collection boxes are available currently in the McCarthy-Towne lobby, at the main branch of the Acton Memorial Library and at the Acton Water District office on Rte. 111.

We currently need help in picking up recycled materials from the library and water district office and packing up materials collected at the school office for shipping. If you can help with either of those tasks, either on a regular or occasional basis, we’d be most grateful. Please tell Astrid (astrostorff@mail.ab.mec.edu) in the office or contact Debbie Simon at deb.simon@comcast.net or 978-263-5322.

5th Grade Market Math Mania A Parent/Child Math Event

This favorite annual event features an extravaganza of higher level "super" market math activities throughout the store. There are many samples and give-a-ways to add to the fun.

Sponsored by Acton PIP* and Roche Bros. of Acton

WHEN: Tuesday, February 12, 2008

OPEN HOUSE 4:30pm to 7:30pm (All activities can be completed in about an hour.)

WHERE: Roche Bros. of Acton (387 Mass Ave)

To learn more, please call Pam Bachrach (635-9696) or Jon Petersen (263-6144) or e-mail us at actonpip@yahoo.com.

For more information, visit www.actonpip.org.

*Acton PIP (Parent Involvement Project) is a group of parents, educators, and community partners supporting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education.

***Save the dates for **3rd Grade Market Math on Wednesday April 2nd** and the **4th Grade Star Party on March 3** (with cloud dates March 4, 5, 6) More details soon ***

Parent and students (grades 7 to 12): volunteers are needed (about a 2 hour commitment) to help run these signature PIP events. Please e-mail actonpip@yahoo.com or call PIP Co-Chair John Petersen at 263-6144 to volunteer. See the PIP web site at www.actonpip.org for more information about upcoming PIP events and resources. Acton PIP appreciates your support in helping make our elementary programs an ongoing success.

Donelan's Receipts

This Valentine's Day, show your love for your family AND your school by shopping at Donelan's.

Will you be baking special treats or creating a memorable meal for your family this Valentine's Day? If so, support McT by shopping at Donelan's for the ingredients! The receipts for your groceries can be turned into free educational equipment, including art supplies and books, for McT.

All you have to do is save your receipts and send them in with your child or drop them in the collection box in the McCarthy-Towne office yourself. Please do NOT cut your receipts. In order to submit them, we must have the entire receipt, showing the store name and location, as well as the items purchased.

Receipts dated September 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008 are eligible.

Thank you! If you have any questions, please contact Wendy Schaad at ws.schaad@gmail.com.

Taking Care of Yourself

Does dealing with your struggling child feel so draining and hard that you are afraid you may lose it at times? Could you use some advice on ways to help YOU as a parent cope during these difficult times? If so, come join us on March 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the R.J Grey Library in Acton as Dr. Nancy Sullivan speaks about ways to help ourselves get through these challenging times with our children. Dr. Sullivan will present some calming techniques for parents, strategies to use to deal with your child's behavioral issues, and most importantly, ways to help parents get through daily struggles with their child. Dr. Sullivan, a clinical psychologist at Children's Hospital, provides family based behavioral therapy for children with a complex developmental, behavioral and psychiatric diagnosis. She has provided behavioral consultation, assessment and intervention in home, community and educational settings.

In addition to hosting this meeting, ABPCC – Acton Boxborough Support Group for Parents of Children with Challenges - will also have our monthly morning meetings at 9:30 a.m. on February 13 (topic: anxiety) and April 3 (topic: take care of yourself) at ABRHS in room 121 east. We will discuss this topic in addition to our general open session. For further information on our group, contact Francesca Ricciardi at fmr08@verizon.net or Lynn Armstrong at lynn.armstrong2@verizon.net.



McCarthy-Towne Auction
Saturday, March 1, 2008
(Yes, that is the Saturday after
February Break!)

Devens Common Center
Devens, MA

Doors Open at 5:30 pm

The McT Auction is almost here! Get ready to enjoy a fun Saturday evening on March 1, 2008 at the Devens Common Center in Devens, MA. This is a beautiful and close location. Catch up with old friends, meet new friends, listen to the MCATS, and bid on great items. The auction is a great time and it is our biggest fundraiser! We are so fortunate to have a community of dedicated parents, faculty and staff who help make this auction a truly great event. Not only does our community donate unique and creative items, there are many folks who give the gift of time in making this event so successful. Thank you to everyone for your continued support!

The Auction Committee is finalizing the Auction booklet, which will be distributed via backpack on **Monday, February 25th**. Directions to the auction will be included in the Auction Booklet. Be sure to review the wide variety of great items available for bidding. If you can't wait, preview the item descriptions and photos of the Classroom Projects in the near future on the Auction website, (www.mctptso.org/fundraising/auction2008/). If you cannot attend, you can submit bids on items by completing the proxy form included in the booklet and sending it back to the McT office.

Remember that ticket reservations can be made until Tuesday, February 26. Those of you who sent your reservations in by February 1st will be entered in a chance to win the Early Bird Prize: \$80 Gift Certificate to Be Well and Beyond.

Raffle tickets were distributed January 16th and should be returned no later than Tuesday, February, 26th. Please return them promptly to have a chance to win those great prizes including a Bose Music System, a Wii or a 4G iPod Nano!

Can you spare an hour of your time to sell raffle tickets? Contact Tammy Sarnelli (tammy.sarnelli@biogenidec.com) or 978-266-1422 to reserve your spot! Times are available for February 2nd and 3rd as well as February 9th and 10th. This is a great opportunity to get the whole family involved in raising money for our school and it only requires an hour of your time!

Last but not least, we would like to have a few more people to work the back room on auction night. If you are interested, please contact Sandy Billings (978-635-1817).

Questions? Call Carolyn Imperato (978-264-9982) or Susan Lerner (978-263-0049).