



# McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

November 6, 2009  
Volume 39, No 3

## November Days

by David Krane, McT Principal

We are all settled into school as a routine now. There aren't any more comparisons to summer weather as McCarthy-Towne gets into the delightful mode of full time thinking about school. Even the recent weather has signaled that change: snow flurries and freezing temperatures ten days ago have marked the difference.

As we move into this change and as I get to spend more time with the staff, the children and the families, I hear more and more about the "McCarthy-Towne way". McCarthy-Towne is a unique and special place and, as a school, holds different meaning for different people. But what, exactly, is the McCarthy-Towne way? Watching the teachers work with the children and watching the children in the classrooms, the gym, Sloyd, music, the Library and how Hannah works so carefully with all the teachers, it occurs to me that much that is true about this school is about process. Well, what is process, then? Process is caring. Process is about learning and discovery and respect. All of these things are clearly apparent in each of the educational settings at McT, even in the lunchroom!

Learning itself is a process of guided discovery. But for real guided discovery to take place, for learning to occur, there has to be a certain level of mutual respect and understanding between teacher and students. And that is clearly happening in our school. This positive attitude goes to the heart of one of the most important of the articulated values here, that of trust. Learning can't take place unless there is a relationship of trust between the teacher and the student. But trust has to be earned from both ends and that's part of the process.

Teachers are all exploring a new math curriculum this year, too. This math curriculum will have a profound effect on teachers and students now and in the future. It is important that we give this, over the course of the current year, a careful, critical look. This process will require trust, professional respect and understanding the importance of differing points of view and perspectives. Teachers understand this and are working hard to use the process effectively and efficiently to achieve these curriculum goals.

Finally, we move to that other critical component of the school triad: the parents and families of all of our students. McCarthy-Towne families are a huge part of the process at school. The PTSO raises a considerable sum for classroom and front office expenses and is there to support teachers and families in a variety of ways. Since we use no report cards, understanding individual student achievement and growth is communicated through conferences between parents and teachers and, sometimes, students. This process, more complex than simply reporting grades, needs to have extensive investment on the part of the families in order to be as effective as it is. It is one of the most important processes in the school to communicate information about student learning.

This, then, is the McCarthy-Towne way. It is process, defined, as a respectful, positive inquiry into finding the best and most equitable solution to a variety of problems and circumstances, involving dialogue, trust, and understanding. It is valuing the process that leads us to the product. It is part of what makes us unique and part of what makes this a remarkable place to learn, as an adult or as a child.

## Mark Your Calendar

### NOVEMBER

- **8, Sunday**
- Fall Clean-Up at PDB, 1-4 PM
- **9-20**
- Winter Clothing drive for *Cradles to Crayons*
- **11, Wednesday**
- NO SCHOOL, Veterans' Day
- **17, Tuesday**
- SCRIP Orders due
- **18, Wednesday**
- Early Dismissal (12:15 PM)
- No PM Kindergarten
- PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- **24, Tuesday**
- Early Dismissal (12:15 PM)
- No PM Kindergarten
- **25, Wednesday**
- Early Dismissal (12:15 PM)
- No PM Kindergarten
- **26-27, Thurs./Fri.**
- NO SCHOOL,
- Thanksgiving Recess

### DECEMBER

- **9, Wednesday**
- PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- **24-Jan. 1**
- NO SCHOOL,
- Winter Recess

## Reminder

Teachers work hard to schedule parent conferences. Please honor your scheduled conference time. If a last minute emergency arises, please call the office or your child's teacher directly.



## by Kim Clark and Tammy Sarnelli, PTSO co-chairs

We had a busy October. Today was picture retake day and the new school directories went out and look great. All of our NSTAR and Gift Wrap orders are in and will be available for pick-up in a few weeks. Details will be coming soon. Watch for it through McTNews and on the PTSO website.

Thank you to all who have already contributed to the Cultural & Performing Arts Committee (CPAC) Fund. We are starting to get closer to our goal of \$3,000. If you have not contributed yet, there is still time. Forms are available on the PTSO website—[www.mctptso.org](http://www.mctptso.org) on the home page under “forms”.

The book fair just ended after full days of class visits and a busy night during the social. The Fall Social was a great success, with an entertaining magician, as well as games and crafts. Thank you to hospitality for supplying food for the Fall Social and Professional Day. And thank you to all those who volunteered their time and who participated in our October fundraisers and socials. Please join us at the next PTSO meeting on Wednesday, November 18 at 7 PM in the Faculty Lounge.

Also, as the holidays approach, please remember there are many ways to help our school while you do your regular holiday shopping:

- **Buy store cards for your holiday purchases, or give as gifts through our SCRIP program.** This month, Scrip will be running a challenge to kick off the holidays. Buying Scrips is an easy way to do your holiday shopping and help McT. See page 3 for details.
- **Shop for groceries at Donelan’s or Crosby’s supermarkets.** For every dollar you spend, McT will earn points redeemable for free educational equipment. See page 3 for details.
- **Shop online at Amazon.com through our school portal** (we get up to 10% of what you purchase). Simply go to the PTSO website ([www.mctptso.org](http://www.mctptso.org)) and click on the Amazon logo.
- **Shop online through OneCause.** Go to the PTSO website ([www.mctptso.org](http://www.mctptso.org)) and click on the OneCause logo for access. Our school earns a percentage of your purchase each time you shop through OneCause, which offers popular online stores including L.L. Bean, Land’s End, The Gap, Crate & Barrel, Borders, Nordstrom and dozens more. Check it out the next time you shop online.

If you have any questions about shopping through Amazon or OneCause, please contact Kimberly Hurwitz ([kimbeth3@aol.com](mailto:kimbeth3@aol.com) or 978-263-0306), our Shopping Service Coordinator.

### The Reading Corner

*from Sharon Ryan, McT Reading Specialist*

The McT “Teachers and Families as Literacy Partners” Program is pleased to announce the recent awarding of a \$250 grant from the Friends of Acton Libraries to be used to purchase literacy materials for families to borrow and enjoy at home with their children. This initiative began last spring with our early literacy evenings and we are thrilled to be able to expand our work to include materials to support literacy at home. The funds will support the continuation of the early literacy evenings as well as to support the purchase of materials such as games, letter tiles, white boards, books with cds and more. We are incredibly grateful to all the kind-hearted volunteers who went above and beyond to assure completion of a special project for use in the reading program. Thank you for making such an incredible difference in our world! Please check in next month’s newsletter for details.

Also, please take a peek at the new “portaportal” created by the district’s elementary reading specialists (<http://guest.portaportal.com/readingforfun>)! This site allows you to access a variety of high-quality literacy websites, designed for grades K–6. Happy reading!

### News from the Sloyd Studio

*by Heidi Kupferman*

It’s been a very creative autumn in the sloyd studio filled with many successful firings of the kiln. Be sure to stop and admire the unique ceramic wall vases sculpted by 4th grade students displayed outside the sloyd room. Also outside the sloyd room are clay leaves and water-color-resist paintings made by students in 1st grade. Displayed in the glass cases are ceramic turtles made by 2nd grade students, alongside clay plant fossils made by students in 5th grade.

Don’t be alarmed if you hear loud noises coming from the sloyd room over the next few weeks; it will be from 6th grade students using coping saws and files to carve puzzles. Our 2nd grade students will also be using hammers and nails to build sculptural house facades.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who help out in sloyd and an extra thank you to all the 6th grade families who will be assisting during the wooden puzzle project.

## Turn Your Holiday Cooking into Art Supplies for McT!



With the upcoming holiday season, most of us will be spending a lot of time and money at the supermarket, buying the ingredients for delicious treats to share with our friends and family. With the *Register Tapes for Education Program* at Donelan's and Crosby's Supermarkets, those groceries can now also help our school! For every dollar spent, McCarthy-Towne will earn points redeemable for free educational equipment, like art supplies and books.

So every time you shop at Donelan's or Crosby's Supermarkets, save your receipts! Simply send in your receipts in with your child or drop them in the collection box in the office. **Receipts dated September 1, 2009–March 31, 2010 are eligible.**

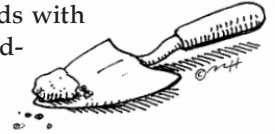
Even if you aren't a regular shopper at Donelan's or Crosby's consider either shopping there during the promotional period or asking your friends and neighbors to give you their Donelan's receipts.

Thank you for your support! Questions can be directed to Wendy Schaad ([ws.schaad@gmail.com](mailto:ws.schaad@gmail.com)).

**Remember... The more you spend, the more we earn!**

## Family Fall Clean-Up Re-Scheduled for THIS SUNDAY!

We were completely rained out last month. Here is your second opportunity to join us for the Fall Clean-Up of the gardens at the Parker-Damon Building. Bring your gardening gloves and rakes on **Sunday, November 8 from 1–4 PM**. Come have fun in the brisk November air raking and cleaning up the grounds with other families. Bring rakes, weeding tools, wheel barrows, kids, friends and neighbors... everyone is welcome!



Remember, McCarthy-Towne is your child's second home—your help is needed to keep it looking beautiful! Please consider helping for even a hour. Hope to see you there—the two school co-chairs are getting very lonely in the gardens. WE NEED YOU!

If you can't make it Sunday, there are other opportunities to help out. We meet every Thursday at 10 AM to work on the gardens. No experience is needed, just enthusiasm and garden gloves! Send an email to Karen ([dkdean83@gmail.com](mailto:dkdean83@gmail.com)) to add your name to the Landscape Committee gardening update list.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Dean ([dkdean83@gmail.com](mailto:dkdean83@gmail.com) or 978-274-2084).

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## November Scrip Challenge

We are challenging YOU, the McT community, to try the Scrip program this month. This is a great program for the school! You simply buy store cards from McT for either gifts or everyday purchases, and those stores give McT a percentage (you receive the FULL VALUE of the card). We are literally getting free money! Why is it free money you ask? If you are going to spend at least \$50 at Roche Bros/Stop & Shop, \$25 at CVS, \$25 at KMart and \$20 at Dunkin Donuts each month, why not buy store cards from us and use them when you shop? These merchants would be giving McT \$5.05 each month. That's \$50.50 over the course of the year! If each of the 370 McT families did the same, our school would earn \$18,700 a year—just with your everyday shopping. And think about how much more the school would make from merchants when you add in the store cards people buy as gifts.

**Our Challenge Goal is to reach a total of 600 cards for the month of November.** Details on how to order, the order form and the reward the children will get if we reach our goal, went home separately today.

Don't forget your holiday shopping. Let us save you the time of having to drive to the mall or ordering store cards on-line at multiple stores; we can bring them all right to you. Order these cards in November and take the pressure off yourself in December! Your friends and family can also order store cards for their everyday purchases or holiday gifts. And remember, you are not just limited to the merchants on our order form; you can order any store card that Great Lake Scrip offers. The directions on how to order on-line and additional order forms can be found on the McT PTSO website at <http://www.mctptso.org/fundraising/scrip>.

**Order forms are due on Tuesday, November 17.** You will have receive the cards before Thanksgiving. Please contact Lynne Densen (978-266-2952 or [lynne.densen@verizon.net](mailto:lynne.densen@verizon.net)) or Maureen Jones (978-266-2874 or [maureen.jones1@verizon.net](mailto:maureen.jones1@verizon.net)) with any questions.



## BMI Notification

*from Betty Johns, McT School Nurse*

As you may know, the Acton Public and Acton Boxborough Regional School nurses have been conducting annual hearing, vision, height, and weight screenings for students in grades K–6, 7, and 10 for many years. This year, because of a new State mandate (105CMR200.500) passed in April 2009, the school nurses will use these heights and weights to calculate Body Mass Index (BMI) for students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. The BMI is a “weight for height for age” index. BMI can be a useful tool in the early identification of possible health risk factors among developing youth.

BMI does not tell the whole story about your child’s health status, and BMI does not distinguish between fat and muscle. For example, if a child is very athletic and has a lot of muscle, his or her BMI may be high even though he or she is not overweight. That is why we will encourage you to share the results with your child’s health care provider. Your child’s doctor or nurse is in the best position to evaluate his or her overall health and will be able to explain to you the results of the BMI screening.

Notification letters of BMI results and resources will be sent in a confidential manner to all parents/guardians of students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 who participate in the height and weight screening. Parents and guardians may waive their child’s BMI screening by submitting a written request to the school nurse. Students’ privacy will be respected at all times during the process of measuring height and weight, calculating BMI, and notifying parents/guardians of results.

## Thank you

*by Astrid Trostorff,*

*Parent Involvement/Community Outreach Coordinator*

Thank you to all the members of our community who volunteer in so many ways. Since the beginning of the school year, there have been many projects and tasks where volunteers came forward to help our school, including (but not limited to):

- Lena and Peter Grant for donating office supplies
- Liese Reilly for replenishing the office supply of hand sanitizer
- Lynne Densen for helping the photographers on School Photo Day
- Lauren Richardt, Carol Blanco, Nisreen Harianawala and Cindy Fanton for stapling Book Fair flyers to the Scholastic newsletter, and then staying to sort UNICEF boxes into class groups
- Lena Saetre-Grant and her assistant Erik Grant for ordering, sorting and distributing the McT T-shirt orders
- Wendy Schaad, Amanda Dindal, Lena Saetre-Grant, Lynne Densen, Julie Greenspan, Connie Olden, Jennifer Mabardy, Amy Miles, Ann Budner, Ana Kerr, Maureen Greer, Maureen Jones, Suzy Epling, Catherine Blount, Patty Sullivan for working on a large project for the Reading Program that took over 40 volunteer hours!
- Suzanne Conley, Olena Murzin, Catherine Blount and Joan McCaffrey for learning how to run the laminator, and for each coming in every other week to laminate materials for teachers
- Amy Traywick, Nicole Lippa, Kerstin Mendelsohn, Tracey Smith, Tina Watlington, Gail Gecawicz, Kathleen Surdan, Joan McCaffrey and Scott Blaufuss for being the office volunteers this year

## MCAS Dates for Spring 2010

Students in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be taking MCAS tests in the spring of 2010. Please avoid scheduling trips and appointments during the MCAS testing periods.

### English Language Arts (grades 3, 4, 5, 6)

Week of March 22–26

### Mathematics (grades 3, 4, 5, 6)

Week of May 10–14

### Science, Technology & Engineering (grade 5)

Week of May 17–21

## Tidbits from Tina

from Tina Morgan, McT School Counselor

### Is Good Enough Ever Enough?

I have good news and bad news. The bad news: your child will not be good at everything he/she does. The good news: that's just fine! This does not sound like rocket science—we all know that no one is skilled at everything. Yet, we don't always act in ways that demonstrate our acceptance of this reality when it comes to our children. We instinctively want them to excel, to be the best, and we encourage them to constantly improve—practice piano; work hard so you can be on the next level in soccer; try out for the spring play; do an extra homework assignment; go to a sport/music/academic camp; do more so that you can get better. It's admirable to encourage our children to improve themselves, but there are times when they need to hear that they are "good enough". I learned this from my eldest son, Brian.

Brian was in the middle of the college search process when he had an interview at a rather competitive small liberal arts school in Pennsylvania. The interviewer inquired about his SAT scores and whether he was planning on taking the test again to improve those scores. Brian politely responded, "My SAT scores are good enough." Across the room, I'm sure I gasped, thinking—wrong answer, Brian! The admissions officer will think you're not driven to excel. They'll never accept you to this college!

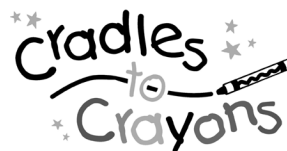
I don't know what the interviewer really thought, but I know that Brian taught me something that day. He knew himself and knew he wanted a good match in a school. He wasn't looking to present himself as anything but who he was. He was "good enough" and he was fine with who he was. As a parent I couldn't ask for anything more!

This lesson has stuck with me in my non-parent life. I am a skier, well sort of. I began skiing at age 22 with the dream of being an expert who would gracefully conquer those double-black-diamond slopes at Mad River Glen or Sunday River. My dream changed over the years and now I simply want to enjoy being on the snow, gliding slowly down the easier slopes (I love the green-dot trails). I'm happy on those trails, so that's where stay. Some might say I should push myself and develop the skills to enjoy the harder trails. Perhaps, but I choose to be "good enough" for what I want to do—enjoy a day on the mountain.

So, my message to you—let your children know that sometimes it's OK to not be the best at something. Sometimes we're just "good enough" and that's just fine.

P.S. Brian was accepted to college, early decision, and went on to get a PhD! More importantly, he is happily married and this summer had a healthy baby boy!

## Clothing Donations for Cradles to Crayons



The McCarthy-Towne Student Council is sponsoring a "Winter Clothing" drive for Cradles to Crayons (C2C) of Massachusetts. The collection (collection bags will be located near the front entrance) runs from **Monday, November 9 through Friday, November 20**.

Cradles to Crayons ([www.cradlestocrayons.org](http://www.cradlestocrayons.org)) is a Massachusetts charitable organization that provides basic essentials to low-income and homeless children age infant–13 years throughout Massachusetts. More than ever, families have a vital role to play in helping children in low-income families stay safe and warm during the cold winter months. With your help, Cradles to Crayons can equip them with the everyday essentials they need to thrive in the coming year.

The following gently used items are desirable donations for this organization: clothing (infant–adult large), winter coats, jackets, sweaters, winter boots, shoes, gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves. All items should be clean, serviceable, and complete such that a child receiving the item would feel valued. (If possible, please place items in a plastic bag labeled with the sizes). New items in the original packaging such as underwear, socks, and pajamas are also appreciated.

So please gear up for winter by going through your closets and identifying items that your children can donate to Cradles to Crayons! Thank you.

## NSTAR Fundraiser

### "Change a Light, Change the World"

Thank you to all the McT families, teachers and staff who participated in our NSTAR fundraiser by purchasing Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs. Once again, it was a successful event raising funds for McT PTSO and helping the environment!

The pickup dates have not been scheduled yet. More information will be sent out through McTNews about the dates and times for pickup. If you are not enrolled in McT news, please contact Maria ([marilcid@gmail.com](mailto:marilcid@gmail.com) or 978 263-0723) so she can contact you directly once the light bulbs are ready for distribution. Thanks again for your contribution!

## Acton Public School Committee Report

from Xuan Kong, Chair ([xkong@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:xkong@mail.ab.mec.edu))

At the October meeting, the School Committee accepted generous donations from five elementary schools, totaling \$566,078. The donations will be used to fund teaching assistants, purchase equipment, and support other school needs essential to delivering the quality educational programs that our children deserve. The School Committee is grateful for the dedication and efforts of our students, parents, and staff and the leadership of the PTOs and principals in their fundraising activities. The School Committee also recognizes the generosity of individuals, local community organizations, and businesses as many of the fundraising events could not be successful without their contributions.

As of October 1, more than 2,500 students are enrolled in our elementary schools. The overall district-wide class size has grown from 23.1 of last year to 23.6 this year. The actual class sizes vary across grades and they are above school committee guidelines in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th grades. Both budgetary and space constraints contributed to the current class size situations.

We are paying close attention to the state's economic news and waiting to see what emergency measures the Governor will announce for this fiscal year. In anticipation of possible cuts in our local aid, the School Committee endorsed a \$125,000 cost-saving plan prepared by superintendent Dr. Steve Mills as our initial response to the crisis. The reductions include eliminating one Central Office position (shared with the regional school district), cutting materials and supplies budgets by 5%, reducing overtime hours, moving the Lamplighter publication to electronic form, and savings in insurance categories. Additional cuts may be required before the end of the school year.

The School Committee is starting the budget process for FY11, which begins July 2010. We are currently planning for a 10–20% reduction in Chapter 70 state aid. The committee and the administration will be looking at all areas of the budget to see where we can reduce costs. This will require many difficult decisions as we try to meet the needs of our students with lowered revenues. The committee is also entering into scheduled collective bargaining with our unions to negotiate new three-year contracts. We will keep you updated over the coming months and urge all of you to come to our meetings and lend your voice to this process.

Our next meeting will be held on November 19 at McCarthy-Towne School. The meeting is also to be televised on local cable stations. All members of the Acton Public School Committee can be reached by sending an email to [apsc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:apsc@acton-ma.gov). We welcome and value your feedback.

## Directory Co-Chair Needed for 2010–11

The McT Student Directory co-chair position still needs to be filled for the 2010–11 school year. The directory co-chair has the following responsibilities:

- Send letters to existing advertisers at the beginning of the year.
- Coordinate volunteers to call existing advertisers to remind them to send in their ads.
- Coordinate volunteers to proofread the directory.
- Ensure all money is collected and deposited and advertisers tracked for the directory chair.
- Proofread final draft of directory.
- Coordinate labeling and distribution of directory to the classrooms.

There are existing templates, forms and instructions for all of these duties. All work for the directory is performed in September and early October and should not involve more than a couple of hours per week. If you have any questions or would like more information about the position, please contact Suzanne Kissane (978-263-2563).

## Family Photo Day Success

A giant thank you to Julie L'heureux and all the families who made the Family Photo Day fundraiser possible. It was a gorgeous sunny day, everyone (and their dogs) looked spectacular. **We raised \$800 smackeroos for the McCarthy-Towne PTO!** Woo hoo!

### Food Service Recipe of the Month

#### Gobbledygook

from *Healthy Cooking for Kids*

#### Ingredients:

- 4 cups Cheerios or other toasted oat cereal
- 1 cup chopped shelled peanuts
- 1 cup raisins, dried pitted prunes or apricots, chopped
- ¼ cup margarine, melted
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1 cup chopped pretzels

#### Directions:

Mix cereal, nuts and raisins in a large bowl. Pour melted margarine over the cereal mixture and toss lightly with a fork until coated. Sprinkle in seeds and pretzel bits and toss again. Or, place the whole mixture into a large plastic bag, seal and shake well. Serve in sandwich bags or small bowls. May be refrigerated in airtight container up to one week. Makes 6–8 servings.

# McCarthy-Towne School – NOVEMBER 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Family Fall Clean-Up, 1–4 PM	Winter Clothing Drive for <i>Cradles to Crayons</i> (runs through Nov. 20)		NO SCHOOL Veterans' Day			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		SCRIP orders due	Early Dismissal (12:15 PM) No PM Kindergarten PTSO Meeting, 7 PM		Last Day of Winter Clothing Drive for <i>Cradles to Crayons</i>	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
		Early Dismissal (12:15 PM) No PM Kindergarten	Early Dismissal (12:15 PM) No PM Kindergarten	NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Recess	NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Recess	
29	30	DECEMBER 1	DECEMBER 2	DECEMBER 3	DECEMBER 4	DECEMBER 5
					December McT Bulletin is published	

## Upcoming PTSO Meetings

Mark your calendar now! PTSO meetings are usually held the second Wednesday of each month at 7 PM in the Faculty Lounge (top floor). Everyone is welcome to attend!

**November 18th    December 9th**