



McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

January 8, 2010
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January is Looking Forward

by David Krane, McT Principal

Happy New Year! Although it's been cold and blustery outside during this past break, it's been a perfect time to spend inside with the warmth of gathered family. At our house, this is the time of year when all of us are at home, glad to spend some time catching up and reconnecting.

Each year, many people use January and the beginning of a new year as time for both reflection and looking ahead to the coming year. School communities, too, use the past as a reference and as a preparation for what's next. Here at McCarthy-Towne, we are getting ready to present ourselves to the community at large as we prepare for the upcoming Kindergarten tours. School choice, a special component of public education here in Acton, compels all of us to stay mindful of our school mission and of our unique way of working with the children who choose our school. Preparing for the tours encourages us to reflect on what has worked so well in the past and also to consider the changes we might want to make in the future to support our mission.

Acton has high expectations for all the schools in town. Each of the five elementary schools works very hard and succeeds in meeting those expectations. Any one of these five schools would be an excellent

choice for incoming Kindergarteners and their families. But what we offer here is very different. The integration of the visual arts into the curriculum across the grade levels begins in Kindergarten and becomes a huge part of the student learning process as kids grow through the school. Also, ours is an environment that is about risk-taking, cooperation and problem solving. It is a place that seeks to have families assume active roles in the school. This is part of what makes us unique in Acton and, indeed, in public education.

The pride that the faculty and staff and children take in being part of McCarthy-Towne is apparent everywhere one looks. The walls display student work, completed and still in process. Conversations in the classrooms are lively and engaging as they are in the staff room! Families are an active part of the school through the School Council and a variety of committees. Active, community and committed are words that describe our school. This is the school we proudly invite prospective families and children to be part of as they tour the McCarthy-Towne School.

I look forward to hearing your ideas on sustaining our great culture. Here's to a great year ahead!

Mark Your Calendar

JANUARY

- **13, Wednesday**
- Community Assembly,
- 4th Grade Variety Show
- PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- **15, Friday**
- Student Council
- "Crazy Hat Day"
- **18, Monday**
- NO SCHOOL,
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **19, Tuesday**
- Priority Kindergarten
- Registration at R. J. Grey
- Junior High School,
- 9 AM-12 Noon and 7-9 PM
- **20, Wednesday**
- Priority Kindergarten
- Registration at R. J. Grey
- Junior High School,
- 9 AM-12 Noon
- SCRIP orders due
- **21, Thursday**
- CPAC Assembly, Mime
- **25, Monday**
- Kindergarten Changeover
- **28, Thursday**
- McT Band Concert, 9:30 AM

FEBRUARY

- **2, Tuesday**
- Early Literacy Fundraiser at
- Willow Books, 6-8 PM
- **6, Saturday**
- Family Game Day, 2-4 PM
- **10, Wednesday**
- PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- **15-19**
- NO SCHOOL,
- Winter Recess
- **24, Wednesday**
- Box Tops due

2010 MCAS Schedule

Students in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be taking MCAS tests this spring. Please avoid scheduling trips and appointments during the testing periods. Testing begins at the beginning of the school day, so students should avoid late arrival to school. If they arrive after their class begins the test, they will not be able to take the test that day.

English Language Arts Reading Comprehension (grades 3, 5, 6)

Tuesday, March 23 and Wednesday, March 24

English Language Arts Composition (grade 4)

Tuesday, March 23

Mathematics (grades 3, 4, 5, 6)

Tuesday, May 11 and Wednesday, May 12

Science, Technology & Engineering (grade 5)

Tuesday, May 18



by Kim Clark and Tammy Sarnelli, PTSO co-chairs

What a December!, We had a great month for Scrip as well as lots of snow for the winter break. We hope everyone got to relax and enjoy the time off from school.

There are lots of fun activities scheduled for January. We will be hosting the 2nd annual McT Family Game Afternoon. This will be a fun time for you and your family to enjoy some games at school, as well as socialize with other families from McT. We will, once again, be offering the McT Spirit Wear, so watch for the order forms at the end of January.

We will, of course, need help at the events, so watch for details and make sure you are linked to our school through the McTNews website. Reminders and requests for help for both events will be sent through McTNews. Plus we currently have only 20 of our families that we have not heard from about going paperless, our goal is 100% on McTNews, so that we can reduce the number of flyers sent home. If you are not receiving email from McTNews, please go to our website, www.mctptso.org, and sign up on the home page (far right page).

Remember, if you are not sure about a date of an event or fundraiser, please visit the McT PTSO website—www.mctptso.org; it is frequently updated.

Upcoming PTSO meetings are scheduled for January 13, February 10, March 10, April 7, May 12, and June 9.

Holiday Thank You

from David Krane

I'd like to thank the entire McCarthy-Towne community for all the wonderful food, small gifts and lovely cards that I received right before the break. I am overwhelmed with your generosity. My entire family was thrilled with the variety of sweets and homemade breads... they were gone in no time! Thanks again and have a wonderful and happy new year!

Thank You

from Astrid Trostorff,

Parent Involvement/Community Outreach Coordinator

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

- Alissa Benway, Amanda Dindal and Nicole Lippa for sorting through Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF boxes, and getting the money counted;
- Lynn Densen and the Hospitality Committee for all the wonderful food, drinks and centerpieces for the November School Committee meeting at McT;
- Suzy Epling, Joan McCaffrey, Marie Clougher, Karen Benn, Maureen Greer, Lisa Petrocchi and Kim Meusel for helping school nurse, Betty Johns, with vision and hearing screenings.

Late Arrival/ Early Dismissal

From the office

Students who arrive in the school building after the official start to the school day (8:30 AM; 12 Noon for afternoon kindergarten) must go to the office upon arrival and fill out a late arrival slip before going to their classroom.

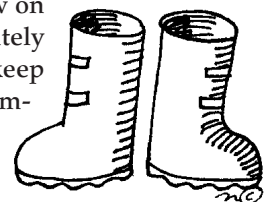
Students being picked up before dismissal time, or without a signed dismissal form, must be signed out in the office and called from their classroom by the office. Parents may not go to classrooms to pick up children.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping McCarthy-Towne safe for all. Contact the office (978-264-3377) if you have any questions.

Dressing For Winter

The cold weather has arrived! Our students will continue to go outside for recess unless it is extremely cold or raining. Recess is a very important part of their day, and gives them a chance to exercise, socialize, and get some fresh air.

Please make sure that your children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Coats, hats, mittens, and boots are a must when the weather is cold, and don't forget snow pants when there is snow on the ground. Dressing appropriately for the winter temperatures will keep the children not only warm and comfortable, but healthy as well.



It's All Fun and Games on February 6

Come to the second annual FREE Game Day on **Saturday, February 6, from 2–4 PM** in the Parker Damon Cafetorium. Come play great games, stock up your game closet, and support McCarthy-Towne!

Bring your family and friends and try out demo games by Gamewright, like Rat-a-Tat-Cat, Slamwich, Sleeping Queens, Ka-Ching, and Luck of the Draw. You can play as many games as you have time for! We've got games for all ages, from preschool to adult.



If you fall in love with a game, you can buy a copy to take home (most sell for less than \$12), and Gamewright will give 50% of the sale price to McCarthy-Towne! Games make great gifts and are a fun way to enjoy cold and stormy days (think February vacation). There will also be teacher wish lists if you want to purchase games for your child's classroom.

There's no cost for admission, and you can extend the invitation to other friends and families in the community—the more the merrier. Parents/guardians must attend with their children, however; this is NOT a drop-off event.

Volunteers are needed to help with setup, cleanup, and game sales—plus, we need Game Gurus to help families quickly learn the rules of the game! If you're interested, please email Sarah Auerbach (sbauerbach@gmail.com).

Crazy Hat Day—January 15th

Friday, January 15 is National Hat Day (thanks, Robin!), and Student Council is holding a "Crazy Hat Day" to raise money for charity. They have chosen three charities—Make a Wish Foundation, Homes for Our Troops, and the World Wildlife Fund. Students who choose to wear hats can make a voluntary donation to one of the three charities (similar to the Read Across America voting) in the lobby during the day on January 15th.

Individual teachers can, of course, set rules or limits for their own classes about the hats. A flier will go home to families next week. Thanks for supporting Student Council and these great charities!

Priority Kindergarten Registration

The Acton Public Schools offers Early Kindergarten Registration for "Priority Admission Candidates." Siblings of students currently enrolled in the Acton Public Schools who will be five years old by September 1, 2010 are given priority registration status. Early Registration will be held at the R. J. Grey Jr. High School on **Tuesday, January 19 from 9 AM–12 Noon and 7–9 PM and Wednesday, January 20 from 9 AM–12 noon.**

For more information and registration forms please visit www.ab.mec.edu/apssturegister.shtml. Parents/guardians must also bring children's birth certificates or passports and most recent physical examination and immunization record.

Willow Books Literacy Fundraiser



Mark your calendars for Tuesday, February 2 from 6–8 PM to attend the second annual Willow Books Literacy Fundraiser! Many of our wonderful McT teachers will be reading to the children and there will be plenty of time to shop (15% of all purchases made during this time frame will be donated to McT). This event is designed to benefit the *Teachers and Families as Literacy Partners* Program! Look for a detailed flyer to arrive later this month with plenty of details about the evening. Thank you in advance for your support.

Scrip Store Card Program

Thank you to all the families that ordered Scrip store cards in the month of December. Now that the New Year is here and the holidays are behind us, it is time to slow down and enjoy each day. We will continue to offer the Scrip program monthly until the end of the school year. Scrips are NOT just for the holidays. They are still a great way to help the school raise money without having to "buy" anything additional.

The order form is attached with the participating vendors. **The next order deadline is Wednesday, January 20.** Please contact either Lynne Densen (978-266-2952 or lynne.densen@verizon.net) or Maureen Jones (978-266-2874 or maureen.jones1@verizon.net) with any questions. Additional Scrip forms can be found at on the PTSO website at www.mctptso.org/fundraising/scrip.



Acton Public School Committee Report

from Xuan Kong, Chair

The school budget for the 2010–11 school year (FY11) will be the primary focus of our January meetings. The School Committee anticipates significant reductions in State Aid, and the need to create a budget that reduces school services. The School Committee needs your input as we prioritize the services that the Town of Acton should provide with its limited resources.

Local property tax and State Aid are the two primary sources for funding school operations. The Acton Finance Committee, in its annual “Point of View,” provided a grim but realistic view of the expected State Aid. The current working assumption is that State Aid will be cut by 10% or more from last year’s level. Other “hidden” education funding cuts from the State include a reduction in reimbursement of student transportation and special education programs.

Under the direction of the School Committee, Superintendent Steve Mills and his staff have developed a preliminary budget for FY11 that appropriates the same amount of money as approved by Town Meeting for FY10. A level funding budget like this will undoubtedly impact educational experience for our students. The School Committee is determined to work with the Superintendent and his leadership team to lessen the impact on our students by minimizing staff reductions and maximizing operational efficiency. The preliminary Acton Public School budget calls for personnel reductions of 16 full time equivalent employees, in addition to other operating budget reductions which total approximately \$500,000. These reductions are necessary in order to balance projected increases in other categories that are beyond our control.

The projected kindergarten enrollment for September 2010 was discussed at the December meeting. For planning purposes, we anticipate enrollment of 309 students. The elementary school principals recommended that 16 kindergarten sections be planned for the next school year. The enrollment models provided by state agencies predict about 270 kindergartners for the next year, although these models have underestimated the actual enrollment numbers for the past few years. After a robust discussion, the School Committee voted to support the principals’ recommendation.

To strengthen communications between the School Committee and our parent/guardian community, a School Committee member liaison will be assigned to each elementary school PTO. The liaison will seek feedback from and provide information to our parent communities on important issues like budgetary choices and educational priorities.

We encourage you to follow the budget process, join our meetings, listen and be heard. You can reach the entire Acton Public School Committee by sending an email to apsc@acton-ma.gov or by visiting the District website (www.ab.mec.edu/about/schoolcommittee.shtml).

Lip-Sync Extravaganza Coming Up

Mark your calendars for our 3rd Annual Lip-Sync Extravaganza on Saturday, April 10 from 4:30–6:15 PM. This event has been a huge hit for two years in a row now. There will be a full program of 24 performances from both McT children and staff. Don’t miss out this year! We have had a lot of people already express interest in performing this year and we had to turn a few acts away last year.

We will be sending information out in March to sign up for the Lip-Sync Extravaganza but it is not too early to start thinking about what song you would like to perform, and if you would like to do it individually or in a group. Take the February break, especially if you are going to perform in a group, to pick your song and start practicing.

Again like last year; we are going to limit each song to a maximum of 3 minutes so as to accommodate all the groups that want to perform. We will also be limiting each group to just one song, although individuals may perform both individually and in a group or in two different groups. Any questions, please contact Lynne Densen (lynne.densen@verizon.net or 978-266-2952). For additional information and sign up guidelines, please visit <http://www.mctptso.org/fundraising/lip-sync>.

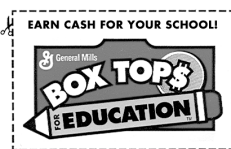
Tidbits from Tina

from Tina Morgan, McT School Counselor

Safe Computing

Are you looking for Web Sites that are safe for your kids? Boy, do I have good news for you! Log onto www.ala.org/parents/greatsites. This site is sponsored by The American Library Association and it lists hundreds of sites that are good for kids. You can browse the site by child’s age and/or by topic of interest. There are sites for researching a history topic (ie Colonial Williamsburg), exploring a science topic (ie Children’s Butterfly), or just enjoying an activity (art sites or puzzle sites). Some of the sites also offer information in different languages, a great opportunity for some of our students/parents who are more comfortable with Portuguese, Russian, Dutch or Spanish! I explored some sites myself, and it was fun! Although I always think we should keep an eye on what children access on the Web, this is a great place to start and feel fairly safe!

Calling All Box Tops



The Fall collection for Box Tops was successful—we raised \$620! Thank you so much for taking the time to clip and collect. As you can see, those little 10¢ Box Tops really do add up and are worth it! The Fall winning classroom will be receiving their rewards very soon.

The next collection due date is February 24. This is a really easy way we can raise money for our school. We have not yet met our goal for the school year though. Your help is still needed. Last year we earned \$1,400 and it would be great to beat it!

Where to find them: Box Tops can be found on many General Mills, Betty Crocker, Juicy Juice, Pillsbury, Green Giant, Old el Paso, Ziploc, Kleenex, Hefty, Saran, Viva, Huggies, Scott, Cottonelle and Kotex products. Look on all sides and surfaces of the packages. Sometimes they're hiding!

What to do with them: Clip them off and tape/glue your Box Tops on to a collection sheet. There are collection sheets in front lobby, outside of the main office. You may also collect them in a Ziploc bag loosely if that is easier. Don't forget to check the expiration date too.

Send them to school with your child or drop collection sheets in the large, collection box located just inside the main office. Be sure to label the collection sheet, bag or envelope with your child's name, grade and teacher. That important information is used to keep track for rewards and the classroom contest! You can also drop them in a bin labeled "McCarthy-Towne Box Tops" at either Roche Bros or Donelan's supermarket.

Others ways to help: Shop your favorite online stores at the Box Tops Marketplace@—www.boxtops4education.com/marketplace. Up to 15% of your purchase total is automatically donated to our school, at no additional cost to you. Plus, you'll get exclusive Box Tops deals and discounts!

Buy books online through the Reading Room, a partnership between Box Tops and Barnes & Noble. McT receives up to 6% of qualifying purchases. www.boxtops4education.com/earn/readingroom/default.aspx.

AB PIP Family Math Game Night

Acton-Boxborough PIP (Parent Involvement Project) invites you to Family Math Game Night on January 20 from 5–8 PM at Sargent Memorial Library in Boxborough. Come play "Domino math", Sudoku, KenKen, Math circles and new this year—explore the connection between art and math with a workshop presented by Village Art. These games are a fun way for students in all grades to practice math facts, estimation skills and work with patterns. This is a free parent-child event, all ages welcome.

Learn more about AB PIP, a volunteer group of parents, educators and community partners, and our activities enriching Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education spanning grades K–12. For Acton-Boxborough PIP information and meeting dates (new volunteers are always welcome) or to preview the math games, visit www.actonpip.org or contact McCarthy-Towne's PIP representative, David McCormick (978-263-5204 or dsmccormick@gmail.com).

Food Service Recipe of the Month

Homemade Granola Bars

from Family Fun Magazine

These sweet, wholesome treats are sure to be a favorite with your family. Wrap each one in foil for an easy on-the-go snack.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 cups crisp rice cereal
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup dried fruit bits
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds

Directions:

Heat oven to 350° F. Coat a 9 x 13" pan with non-stick cooking spray and set aside.

Melt butter in a large pot over low heat. Remove pot from heat and whisk in sugar, honey, flour, vanilla extract, and cinnamon. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Transfer the mixture to the prepared pan. Press the granola mixture firmly into the pan, packing it to a flat and even thickness.

Bake for 20 minutes, until golden brown. Allow the granola to cool 1 hour in the pan, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before cutting into bars. Makes 16–24 rectangular bars.

McCarthy-Towne School – JANUARY 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10	11	12	13 Community Assembly, 4th Gr. Variety Show PTSO Meeting, 7 PM	14	15 Student Council "Crazy Hat Day"	16
17	18 NO SCHOOL Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19 Priority Kindergarten Registration at R. J. Grey Jr. High School, 9 AM–12 Noon and 7–9 PM	20 Priority Kindergarten Registration at R. J. Grey Jr. High School, 9 AM–12 Noon SCRIP orders due	21 CPAC Assembly, Mime	22	23
24	25 Kindergarten Changeover	26	27	28 McT Band Concert, 9:30 AM	29	30
31	FEBRUARY 1	FEBRUARY 2 Early Literacy Fundraiser, Willow Books, 6–8 PM	FEBRUARY 3	FEBRUARY 4	FEBRUARY 5 February McT Bulletin is published	FEBRUARY 6 Family Game Day, 2–4 PM

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!

January 13th February 10th March 10th April 7th May 12th June 9th