



# McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

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## December Changes

by David Krane, McT Principal

The words of the song tell us that all the leaves are brown and the sky is gray... this is what it looks like outside my window today as we look forward to only the second full, five-day week since the third week of October. Although we had a bit of dark skies, general dampness and that first bite of cold to begin our Thanksgiving break last week, it was still probably a portent of things to come. Now that it is December is just days away as I write this, we can (and should) really prepare ourselves for the real winter.

We are also just about one third of our way through the school year and we are noticing and tracking how the children are changing, too. Conferences are, for the most part, recently completed. Families and teachers have been able to sit down and speak to the learning that is happening in the McCarthy-Towne classrooms. One of the extraordinary parts of this school is the level of respect that develops between student and teacher. For kids to really grow as learners and citizens, the teachers must have a solid understanding of the child as both a person and a learner. Knowing and understanding where a student is as a learner is the critical on-going process towards guiding that child in sustained growth. Mutual respect between teacher and student deepens that understanding and nurtures the growth.

We are also about a third of the way through a year that has seen many, many changes around us. Our school population has changed and continues to change and reflecting those differences is our change in personnel. Ashley Bock, our full time ELL teacher is working with all of our teachers and our increased population of students for whom English is not their native language. This is an example of the changing demographic not just in our school, but in our district, too. I am delighted that we have more resources in place to meet this need, and I am also delighted to watch our school continue to change and evolve, too.

I have written before that Thanksgiving has been traditionally a time to reflect. As I think back over the first third of our year, I am so impressed with the remarkable way that this amazing faculty has adjusted to so many staff changes as well as to some scheduling and process changes. We are fortunate to have the forward-thinking and flexible faculty that we have. I also think of the generous and giving parent community and how much they, too, support our vision. It is an authentic partnership and for all this we can indeed be thankful.

I look forward with anticipation and confidence as we move into the next portion of our school year. Change and growth is always positive, as long as we reflect on what we do to facilitate that change and growth. Have a great December!

## Never too Late to Donate!

Thank you to the almost 30 families who have supported the students and staff of our school with a donation to the Annual Appeal. **Their donations have surpassed \$3,700** and will strengthen our efforts to improve the McT educational experience.

Over the past four years this fundraiser has been the second largest after the Auction (admittedly a distant second). **We are well below our goal of \$6,500, but it is not too late to add your support to our efforts. All donations made before Winter Break are tax deductible for 2016**, and all families making donations will be receiving a receipt letter before the year is out. If you have already contributed, thank you for supporting our children and their school. If you haven't and are able to, it isn't too late to join the cause.

## Mark Your Calendar

### DECEMBER

- 8, Thursday**  
Unicef Boxes Due
- 14, Wednesday**  
Scrip Orders Due by 3:30 PM
- 15, Thursday**  
Early Dismissal, 1 PM  
Winter Choral Concert, 7 PM  
4th, 5th and 6th Grade Only
- 20, Tuesday**  
PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- 23, Friday**  
Pajama Day
- 26-Jan. 2**  
NO SCHOOL, Holiday Break

### JANUARY

- 3, Tuesday**  
School Reopens
- 5, Thursday**  
Early Dismissal, 1 PM
- 16, Monday**  
NO SCHOOL,  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 19, Thursday**  
Early Dismissal, 1PM



## from Chris Hanlon and Judy Bourdon, PTSO co-chairs

As parents of elementary students, we can spend countless hours as part of their learning process “in the moment”... helping them try to remember the difference between the letters B and D, flipping and re-flipping those multiplication flash cards (even the especially troublesome ones like 9 x 6), listening to stories of recess adventures and lunch table discussions. And while what we do for our children on a day to day basis is essential to what and how they learn, at times we are asked to look at the big picture of education in our district. Several of these “big picture” issues were highlighted at our most recent PTSO meeting by guests Eileen Zhang and Kristina Rychlik, members of the school committee. I want to touch on two of these issues briefly, as it is important for us to consider large scale topics at times:

**School start times** (time of day, not month and day summer vacation ends) continue to be examined, and the school committee is giving strong consideration to the evidence that later start times would benefit junior high and high school students. A change in start times for older students would most likely require our elementary students to begin their days earlier. Any changes the school committee considers would take place beginning in Fall 2018.

An even bigger picture topic under consideration is the **district’s Master Plan**. Given several buildings in the district that are in need of major repairs, the school committee has been reviewing different options to find what makes the most sense educationally and financially. This is more of a five to seven year process, and realistically will most impact students who haven’t even started their McT careers year. But sub-topics such as changing grade configurations (which grades are at which buildings) and a bond to finance some of the changes should interest us all.

It is difficult to stay informed on these discussions, especially when attending a school committee meeting can be a long and late Thursday night, and a confusing one given all the educational jargon and acronyms you have to sort through. There are however opportunities for public comment at a school committee meeting, and sharing your opinion in this manner can be a powerful democratic tool. You are also able to share your thoughts with the entire school committee and the superintendent via e-mail ([abrsc@abschools.org](mailto:abrsc@abschools.org)).

Besides visiting PTSO meetings, school committee members are trying to make what they do more publicized by sending out condensed monthly updates from their meetings. (Think Reading Level S or T, not ZZZZZZ, as in puts us to sleep!) We will be posting these updates on the McT PTSO web site to help you keep up on big picture timelines and decisions. Hopefully these efforts will result in more feedback and fewer surprises as changes occur in the next few years.

**Finally, please join us for the final PTSO meeting of 2016, on Tuesday, December 20th at 7 PM in the library.** We always include time to ask questions and discuss whatever “big picture” or “in the moment” concerns you might have.

If you have any thoughts or questions, please contact either Chris Hanlon ([hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com](mailto:hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com)) or Judy Bourdon ([judyandroland@gmail.com](mailto:judyandroland@gmail.com)).

## Lip Sync Chair Needed Next Year—2018!

*from the 2017 Lip Sync Team*

Do you love the Lip Sync? Do you want to see the show continue in 2018? If you love music and working with fun, enthusiastic kids, this is the volunteer opportunity for you! A Parent Volunteer is needed to plan and run the 2018 Lip Sync Extravaganza. The 2017 Lip Sync Team is starting to plan the event for next Spring, and we welcome anyone interested in learning more to shadow and help this year. If you are interested in learning more about this awesome community and musical event, contact Deb Verner ([debverner@gmail.com](mailto:debverner@gmail.com)). Rock On!

## Safe Arrival

If you are traveling over the holidays, please remember to contact the Safe Arrival hotline at 978-264-4098 with your travel dates so that we don’t worry about your child(ren). Even if you have emailed your child’s teacher, you still need to contact Safe Arrival. This hotline is on 24 hours a day so you can leave a message at any time. You can even call far in advance of your vacation if you know the dates that your children will be absent. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

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



The holiday season is in full swing and many of us will be spending lots of time and money at the supermarket, buying ingredients for delicious treats to share with friends and family. With the *Register Tapes for Education* program at Donelan's, those groceries can now also help our school! For every dollar spent, McCarthy-Towne will earn points redeemable for free educational supplies.

Save your receipts when you shop at Donelan's! Send in receipts with your child or drop them in the collection box in the office. Receipts dated **September 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017** are eligible.

### Scrip Card Program News



Thank you McCarthy-Towne community! **We met the November Challenge and McT received \$551.00.** Fantastic Job! Your continuous support is greatly appreciated. **The McT community will enjoy a Pajama Day on Friday, December 23rd.**

If you didn't order in November, don't worry. There's still time. As you begin holiday shopping for your children, nieces/nephews, siblings and neighbors, consider giving a Scrip store card. Don't forget about using Scrip cards for your everyday purchases, too. Scrip gift cards also make great gifts for teachers, bus drivers, babysitters, co-workers and those hard-to-buy-for relatives. The gift cards are available in many denominations—\$5, \$10, \$25 and higher. Please note that there are limited-time-only cards on the order form. Some include \$5 Barnes and Noble, Panera and Starbucks and \$10 Shaw's, Amazon, AMC and Target. These make great stocking stuffers!

The December order form will be sent home with your child on Friday, December 2nd. **Orders are due Wednesday, December 14th by 3:30 PM.**

**Please Note:** We can not accept late orders this month. Understand this date is firm so we can order and receive the cards in plenty of time for the holidays. Cards will go home (or ready to be picked up) on Wednesday, December 21st.

Please contact Pam ([phippensteele@gmail.com](mailto:phippensteele@gmail.com)) with any questions about the Scrip program.

## The McT Tag Sale is Back! Save the Date!

Are you cleaning for the Holidays? Save your toys, bikes, clothes, sporting equipment, books, furniture and household items for the annual McCarthy-Towne Tag Sale. Because of your amazing donations and efforts, we typically raise almost \$2,500 and thousands of items found new homes!



**The McT Tag Sale will take place late April or early May, details to come.** We need your help to make the Tag Sale a success! If you would like to help out in any capacity or want to learn more about the sale, contact Becky Barnett ([becky@highrock.org](mailto:becky@highrock.org)).

### McT Mileage Club... Down to the Frozen Four!

The McT Mileage Club is a morning exercise program for McT students along with any parents/siblings who wish to join in the fun. We have been adding up the laps all fall and will continue this month as long as the weather allows. (Namely that it doesn't get too cold or too slushy!) The McT Milers recently enjoyed a "Turkey Trot" on the high school track before Thanksgiving, and we are hoping for four more Fridays and our annual Jingle Jog before winter break. Dress for the weather!

A big thanks to all the great parent helpers who make our Friday mornings possible and to our staff McT Milers: Tom, Matt, Noreen, and Nurse Betty.

After we conclude for our fall session, we will take a break during the winter months then plan to be back out doing our laps in April. If you would like more information about this free, drop-in program, please email Chris Hanlon ([hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com](mailto:hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com)).

### Volunteer Needed to Video the 2017 Lip Sync

The 2017 Lip Sync Extravaganza organizers are searching for a volunteer to video the show so McT students will have lasting memories of their performance. Professional experience is not necessary, just the enjoyment of taking videos. As a videographer for the show, you must have your own equipment and be available to attend the Rehearsal on Thursday, April 6th from 1–3 PM and the show on Saturday, April 8th from 3–6 PM. If interested, contact Deb Verner ([debverner@gmail.com](mailto:debverner@gmail.com)).

## Donate a Book to the McCarthy-Towne Library for the Holidays or Anytime!

All families are invited to participate in the McCarthy-Towne Gift Book Program. It's easy to give a high quality library book that will provide years of enjoyment for our children.

Donating a library book is a meaningful tribute to an individual or a group. You can honor a child's birthday, thank a reading buddy, or remember a favorite teacher. (Book donations make excellent holiday gifts too!) We will place a bookplate in your donated book(s) and will contact you through email for details about the donation inscription.

Our library's "wish list" of books is available on Amazon. Here's how to donate:

- Go to Amazon.com, click on "Wish Lists" and enter "McCarthy Towne" in the search field. A link to the list is also available on the PTSO Book Gifting website (<http://mctptso.org/social-community/#>).
- From Amazon, browse the wish list, make your selection, and purchase the book. It is important to select "This will be a Gift" and enter your name in the "Gift Note" box. Books will be shipped directly to the school library.
- If you prefer, books from our list can also be purchased from your local bookseller. If you purchase the book from a retailer other than Amazon, please go to the Amazon wish list, click on "Buying this book elsewhere" and enter the required information so the book title will be moved to our purchased list. Books bought locally can be delivered to the library by you or your child.
- After purchasing the book, you will be contacted by email to get the wording of your donation bookplate.
- If you cannot decide on a book title, you are welcome to send in a check (payable to McCarthy-Towne PTSO) and let Donna decide on your book donation. You will be notified through email of the book selection.



Please contact Jen Lewy ([jen@zenmarketing.net](mailto:jen@zenmarketing.net)) with any questions. Thank you for your support of our school library!

## McCarthy-Towne Auction 2017!

We have so much auction news this month it requires its own packet! Make sure to look for the special Auction packet with today's other papers. You'll especially want to make sure to catch the trivia question for your next chance at winning a free drink ticket to be used at the auction!



### McT Office email

When emailing the school office, please use the following email: [mctoffice@abschools.org](mailto:mctoffice@abschools.org). If you are emailing a bus pass or dismissal change, you will receive a return email saying "Got it" from Christine, Carol or Tracey.

### Unicef Boxes!

**Last Call!** If your child collected for Unicef during Halloween, please have them bring their orange box into the school office by no later than Thursday, December 8th. Thank you!

### The Office Would Like to Thank...

All the families who contributed to the Student Council food drive for the Acton Food Pantry.

**Our Office Volunteers** who help the school day run smoothly by processing bus passes and dismissal forms, copying and laminating for teachers, and pitching in with many special projects. Our wonderful volunteer roster includes: Claudia Abramson, Martha Brandt, Jesse Busiek, Aditi Chandra, Tracey Estabrook, Pam Hippensteele, Ashlee Kim, Bibiana Knell, Christine Kobelski, Jen Nelson, Cura Pfefferkorn, Erin Pittorino, Jenny Reynolds, Sara Russell, Nicole Sheehan, Fiona Starr, Mariah Straayer, and Julie Weir.

**Our Bulletin Crew:** Rebecca MacNeill our Bulletin Editor; Jesse Busiek, our Bulletin Collating volunteer; and David Rachlin (with Noreen Cohen's class) and Jillian Short (with her class,) the class volunteers for the September and October issues.