

McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

February 1, 2013
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Slip Sliding into February

by David Krane, McT Principal

Although January has been messy and very cold, we haven't had any snow days. But we have had all of the other trappings of an elementary school in winter, trappings that are not at all fun. Various sicknesses have become part of our school life this past month and they have hit us pretty hard. We have had as many as thirty-five children out on recent days, in spite of all the Purell and hand washing. These illnesses are a fact of life in schools, especially in buildings that house two large schools. But we keep pressing on...

We have also just completed two tour days. The tours have become a time that I look forward to as my understanding and knowledge of all things McCarthy-Towne continues to grow. I enjoy my role in bringing up the points of pride about McT. Prominent among these is the way that we look at process in learning. Children bring very individual learning styles to school and teaching children that their learning is an individualized process of guided discovery is part of what we do here at McT. Understanding that learning and understanding is a process that can help to remove some of the anxiety that kids may bring to the classroom. Using the visual arts in the classroom is just one way to illustrate and demonstrate that process. Seeing that process displayed as we guide curious visitors through the school is one of the biggest points of pride here.

We are looking forward to February 12 and to our Kindergarten Evening. This is my fourth year to lead our Kindergarten Evening and each year it becomes more of a pleasure. There is a lot to be proud of at our school and it is fun to have so many faculty members, parents and, of course, Student Council members, all be a part of showing off who we are. We can talk about how our community is indeed a large part of raising a responsible child, one who is invested

in her learning. When the Student Council members can articulate so clearly what it is they do in their classrooms and how it helps them grow, socially and academically, then we know we have achieved some measure of success. In the end, it is the children who will tell us if we have succeeded in our efforts, and hearing those students speak to our visitors, I believe we are doing all the right things. The tours are a chance for people to visit and see all of this in action. The teaching in the classrooms, the hard work displayed on the walls and the interactions between kids and their teachers and all the other adults in our school are all terrific examples of who we are as a school. Thank you so much to Patty Lee, our Parent Involvement Coordinator, parent touring volunteers, and to the teachers who have all been part of the process of showing off our school! The feedback has been hugely positive.

Although we have experienced so many absences due to illness, as we approach February break I feel compelled to run this message again. You will see it with more frequency as the rest of the year unfolds, too. This is a time of year when some families will take "unofficial" family vacations. I cannot emphasize enough how important every minute of every day is at school. Teachers work hard to prepare instruction that is sequential. Missing substantial chunks of school time due to these "unofficial" family vacations sends the wrong message to students and, it's important to add, to teachers, too. Children deserve to be part of every classroom endeavor and it puts kids at a disadvantage by being deliberately out of school for reasons of vacation. Please try and keep this in mind as you make family plans.

I am looking forward to an equally wonderful second half of the school year!

Mark Your Calendar

FEBRUARY

- 5, Tuesday**
5th Grade Market Math at Roche Bros., 4:30-7:30 PM
- 7, Thursday**
Community Assembly
- 8, Friday**
Auction Donation forms due
- 12, Tuesday**
Scrip orders due
- 13, Wednesday**
Auction T-Shirt orders due
Early Literacy Fundraiser at Willow Books, 6-8 PM
- 14, Thursday**
PTSO Meeting, 9:30 AM
- 15, Friday**
Box Tops due
- 18-22**
NO SCHOOL, Winter Recess
- 25, Monday**
Auction Ticket orders due

MARCH

- 9, Saturday**
Auction, 5:30 PM
- 13, Wednesday**
PTSO Meeting, 7 PM
- 19, Tuesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 3, 4, 5, 6
- 20, Wednesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 3, 5, 6
- 25, Monday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 4
- 27, Wednesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 4

from Kate Murray and Tracey Smith, PTSO co-chairs

This month, as we hear about Kindergarten registration and see eager young families in the building, it floods my mind with so many memories: back to when I was one of those very anxious first time parents totally overwhelmed with the school choice process, the constant worry of ending up with “not my first choice school,” and the calmness that came to me when I chose McCarthy-Towne for my four children. I have never looked back, even when I constantly heard, “Oh, you have boys, you can’t send them to McCarthy-Towne, they have too much art there.” My decision was reaffirmed last week when a fellow McT parent sent me an article in the Washington Post titled *Top 10 Skills Children Learn from the Arts* (www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/top-10-skills-children-learn-from-the-arts). I was on the right track way back then when my first child was only five and it confirms for me that my boys are still on the right track as they make their way through the halls of this building. Thank you to the Kindergarten registration process for bringing this all back to me!

I’d also like to remind everyone to please take note of the special Thursday edition of the Howler each week. Separate from the “regular” news of our Monday Howler, the Thursday edition is dedicated solely to keeping you up to date on the Auction. It’s jam-packed with all the behind-the-scene happenings of this amazing event! **Tickets are on sale now so book your sitter for March 9th!** And don’t forget to ask your kids all about the auction project they are working on as a class, you are sure to hear about some pretty amazing activities.

Our next PTSO meeting is Thursday, February 14th, at 9:30 AM, in the cafeteria. See you there!

**Story Time at Willow Books with
McT Teachers and Staff**



Come to Willow Books in Acton on Wednesday, February 13 from 6–8 PM and enjoy stories read by many of your favorite teachers and staff. The exact times for each reader will be sent out via email through the McT Howler.

This is a terrific and fun event that directly benefits our youngest literacy learners (this is NOT a PTSO fundraiser). **Willow Books will generously donate 15% of all sales during this Story Time event directly to Sharon Ryan’s “Teachers and Families as Literacy Partners” seminars for support materials.**

Sharon Ryan, McT’s Reading Specialist, will again be providing seminars entitled “Teachers and Families as Literacy Partners” this spring for both incoming Kindergarten parents and parents of current Kindergartners moving on to 1st grade. These seminars will provide parents with resources and skills to use over the summer to nurture literacy in their children. The program will include enjoyable and engaging literacy materials for each family to take home and use over the summer and throughout the year. This exciting evening, hosted by Willow Books, will help to fund these literacy seminars and the fun take-home materials. Thank you in advance for helping our youngest literacy learners.

Please contact Sharon Ryan (sryan@abschools.org) with any questions about the Willow Books event or the literacy seminars.

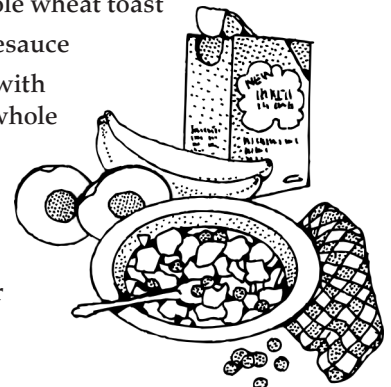
Breakfast is Important!

The most important meal of the day may be breakfast. Current research suggests that eating breakfast improves a child’s learning skills, attendance, weight control, cholesterol levels and physical endurance. Breakfast-skippers often feel restless, tired and have difficulty concentrating on tasks. Despite the healthful benefits, breakfast is the meal that is most neglected. Many students, especially adolescents, do not understand the importance of finding the time to eat in the morning.

Breakfast is the first chance that the body has to “refuel.” A healthy breakfast should consist of complex carbohydrates, low-fat proteins or dairy sources, and fruit. According to the American Dietetic Association, quick and easy breakfasts can include the following:

- Ready to eat cereal with fruit and milk
- Toasted bagel with cheese
- Fruit filled breakfast bars and yogurt
- Fruit smoothie (fruit and milk mixed in a blender)
- Peanut butter (if not contraindicated because of allergies) on whole wheat toast
- Oatmeal with applesauce
- Fresh fruit topped with yogurt and crispy whole grain cereal

For more information about the importance of eating breakfast, please visit www.eatright.org or www.chopchopmag.org.



AUCTION NEWS

RAFFLE TICKETS: News and Sales

We have some AMAZING raffle prizes this year—an HD Kindle Fire, an iPad Mini with case and a Bose Wave® Radio II. Please check your child's backpack! Raffle tickets to sell went home in backpacks last Friday.

Have You Signed Up to Sell Raffle Tickets Yet?

We need people to sell raffle tickets in hour-long shifts at Roche Bros. and Donelan's on the two weekends preceding the auction. This is a great opportunity to get the kids and their friends involved because they can help sell tickets too! We will take any and all hours you are able to offer! Even an hour after a soccer or basketball game is a great way to show support for our school.

We also need a few Raffle Roadies to work on the night of the Auction (March 9) from 5:30–7 PM, selling tickets for the gift bag table.

PLEASE HELP! Selling raffle tickets to friends, family, and neighbors really does add to the financial success of the auction! For more information or to sign up, please contact our raffle chair, Michele Caterina (michelecaterina1@gmail.com).

Auction T-Shirts

Worried about what to wear to the auction? Let the Auction committee take all those worries away! At only \$15 a piece, your wardrobe issues are not only solved, but you will actually want to wear these out when the event is over! Order forms are available on the auction website at www.mctptso.org/auction. They are really nice! Samples are hanging up in the main office or visit the auction website to see the design!



Buy Tickets Today!

Attend the Auction on March 9th. This year's gourmet selections include pasta primavera, chicken provençal, and teriyaki beef tips. All for only \$30 per person! Downloadable Ticket Reservation Forms can also be found on the auction website! Space is limited, so don't delay in returning your form!

Rock On...

Don't forget to check out the new special Thursday editions of the Auction Howler news!

Keep Sending in Receipts

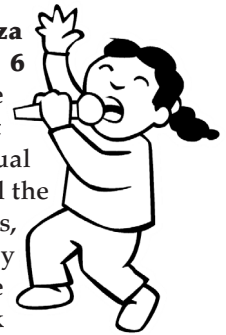


Please keep saving your Donelan's receipts until March 31, 2013! This wonderful program allows McCarthy-Towne to earn FREE supplies. Simply send in your Donelan's receipts to school with your child. They can be given to your child's teacher or dropped directly in the collection box in the office. **Receipts dated between September 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013 are eligible for the program.**

If you have any questions about the program, please contact Kate Hoitt (kjhoitt@verizon.net).

Lip Sync!

Our annual Lip Sync Extravaganza is scheduled for Saturday, April 6 from 4:30–6:30 PM. Now is the time for your child to start thinking about whether they want to perform individual or as a group and to what song. With all the new, popular songs out there, parents, PLEASE check the lyrics before they start practicing to make sure they are appropriate. Sometimes songs we think are fine, when we look at the words, we realize they are not. We had to say no to a few songs last year. Lyrics can be found at www.metrolyrics.com. Last year's program, as well as guidelines for the Lip Sync can be found at www.mctptso.org/fundraising/lip-sync.



Yard Sale Update

Mark your calendar! **On April 27th McCarthy-Towne will be hosting a GIANT yard sale to raise money for the PTSO.** Students and parents can support this fundraiser by donating goods, posting signs, organizing and tagging donations, and working as cashiers. This year will be a "neighborhood" sale and we will share the date with Merriam. Twice the stuff at great prices! We will also need help with donation of baked goods for a bake sale to be held at the same time. Helpers get first dibs on sale items. Keep your eye out for backpack flyers and posters with further suggestions on items to donate and times you can help out.

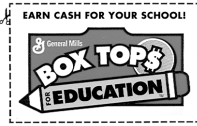
We need help on Friday evening April 26 with sorting and tagging donations and on Saturday, the day of the sale. If you can help, please contact Julie Weir (julieannweir@yahoo.com).



First Box Top Check Received!

CPAC Update

Great Job, McT! In December we received a check from *Box Tops For Education*® for \$1,044. This just goes to show that they really do add up, so please remember to keep an eye out for Box Tops. Teachers, shopping at Staples? Remember, all Avery products have Box Tops. Parents, plan on whipping up a special dessert? Betty Crocker cakes and brownies have Box Tops too! Kids, going over to your grandparents' house for a visit? Have a look through the cabinets in search of Box Tops! Remember, the classroom that brings in the most Box Tops will win a prize (playground toys, or games and books for their classroom).



Our next Box Top collection is due on Friday, February 15. Just clip Box Tops off the product package and either glue them to the collection sheet (check your child's backpack) or send them in a Ziploc bag or envelope. Please label you child's collection with their name, grade, and teacher's name. Send them to school with your child or drop-off in the large collection box just inside the main office. You can also drop them in a blue box labeled "McCarthy-Towne Box Tops" at Roche Bros supermarket. If you have any questions please contact Debbie (debfwalz@gmail.com). We'll be sending off our next collection in late February. Help make this check even bigger than our December payout!

CPAC Received ABCC Grant for Helen Lester

The Cultural and Performing Arts Committee (CPAC) is pleased to announce that we received a generous grant from the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council (ABCC) for author Helen Lester's visit in October. The sizable award of \$900 was shared by all six Acton and Boxborough schools, so each school received \$150 to defray the cost of Ms. Lester's appearances, including her travel from New York and hotel costs. Helen Lester is the beloved author of such well-known picture books as *Tacky the Penguin* and *Wodney Wat*. Like her books, she was charming and lots of fun—the kids loved meeting her! Ms. Lester's appearance was a joint effort of the arts enrichment coordinators in each of the six schools, a great example of collaboration to benefit our students. We would like to thank ABCC for this generous grant, which allows us to stretch our parent donations further.

The Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council is a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Upcoming CPAC Show: Karim Nagi

On Wednesday, April 3, CPAC will be welcoming Egyptian-American performer, Karim Nagi, to our school. Mr. Nagi takes students on an engaging, high-energy journey to learn about Arab and Muslim culture through a variety of traditional instruments, folk music, and traditional dance. He uses authentic costumes, maps, Arabic words, lots of audience participation, and humor as he enlightens his audience about a captivating world beyond the headlines. Karim is a master percussionist and dancer who likes to have fun with his audience! A former faculty member of the New England Conservatory of Music, Karim now performs nationwide to great acclaim with the SHARQ Arabic Music Ensemble.

We are currently working on a theatrical performance for the February/March time frame. Stay tuned. CPAC sincerely thanks the generous McCarthy-Towne parents who make our programs possible!

2013 MCAS Schedule

The District has set the schedule for the MCAS English Language Arts tests for this Spring. Please see the schedule below for when students in Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be taking MCAS test. Please avoid scheduling trips and appointments during the MCAS 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 19th and Wednesday, March 20th

English Language Arts Composition (Grade 4)

Tuesday, March 19

(Make-Up Date: Thursday, March 28)

English Language Arts Reading Comprehension (Grade 4)

Monday, March 25th and Wednesday, March 27th

Mathematics (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6)

Week of May 6

Science, Technology & Engineering (Grade 5)

Week of May 13

Safe Arrival Reminder - February Vacation

If you are traveling for an extended period over the February vacation, please remember to contact the Safe Arrival hotline at 978-264-4098 so that we don't worry about your child(ren). Even if you have e-mailed your child's teacher, you still need to contact the Safe Arrival hotline. The Safe Arrival hotline is on 24 hours a day so you can leave a message at any time. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Fun Fitness Fridays

Many of you were part of the McT Mileage Club this fall, logging hundreds of morning laps in the recess area. Well, now the Mileage Club's winter cousin, Fun Fitness Fridays (FFF), has begun. Here are some basics:

WHEN: FFF will take place from 8:30–9 AM on Fridays through March 22.

WHERE: On the McT side of the gym in the Parker Damon Building.

WHO CAN COME: All McT students, along with any interested parents or young siblings. Whether or not you were in McT Mileage Club this fall, you are welcome to come to FFF!

WHO WILL ORGANIZE FFF: Dave James is coordinating FFF; Chris Hanlon provides help and organizes parent volunteers.

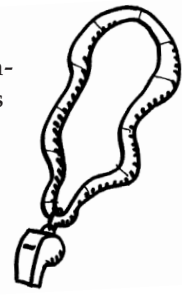
HOW DOES FFF DIFFER FROM McT MILEAGE CLUB:

- Instead of laps, we are doing circuit workouts. This involves many exercise stations, each one lasting from 30–50 seconds. Exercises focus on upper and lower body strength and cardiovascular activity.
- There aren't charts, lap counting, or foot tokens for FFF (that will return in the spring).
- We meet a bit later (8:30), so you don't have to rush out the door in the morning!

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO DO TO PARTICIPATE IN FFF:

- Please complete a registration sheet. They are available in the office or when you come to your first session.
- Send your children in active clothes. We will be indoors for all FFF sessions.
- Consider sending a very quick snack or drink. After 30 minutes of vigorous activity, your children would profit from a bit of nutrition on their way to class.
- If you are a parent who would like to volunteer to help on a regular or semi-regular basis, please let us know.

Any questions or thoughts? Please contact Chris Hanlon (hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com or 734-904-1061).



Scrip Gift Card Program

Thank you to all of the families that ordered Scrip cards in the month of January. Scrip 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. With only 5 more opportunities to purchase Scrip Cards, you can help us reach our fundraising goal by purchasing cards through this program today!

In addition, Scrip Cards are a great way to donate to the McT Auction! You can purchase Scrip cards to enhance some of the prizes and auction items up for bidding, or use them to purchase an item you'd like to donate!

Look for the February Scrip Order Form in today's backpack mail. The form, additional information, and February specials can be found at www.mctptso.org/fundraising/scrip.

The next order deadline is Tuesday, February 12 at 3:30 PM—please note the early deadline this month. Cards are expected to be delivered before February break. For questions about the program, contact either Wendy Schaad (ws.schaad@gmail.com) or Mimi Kirkman (mimikirkman@yahoo.com).



Selected Facts About Flu

What is the Flu? The flu is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the lungs, nose and throat. The virus is easily passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. For most people, the flu makes them feel very sick, but they generally get better in about a week. In New England, flu season usually begins in December and lasts until April.

Symptoms of the Flu include sudden onset high fever (102-104°F; 39-40°C) lasting 3–5 days, headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion which can last 2 weeks or more, and dry cough. Some people may be unsure if they have a cold or the flu. Colds are usually milder and do not come on suddenly. Cold symptoms include stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and cough.

Treatment of Flu symptoms: Rest in bed. Drink lots of fluids. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Stay home for at least 3–5 days after you get sick so you don't pass the flu to others. Call your doctor for any of the following reasons: fever that does not get better after 3–5 days; difficulty breathing; chest pain; cough lasting > 7–10 days and/or accompanied by mucus that is green, rust-colored or bloody; you are not able to drink enough fluids.

Reducing risk: Get a flu shot every year. Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Cover your mouth with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Avoid close contact with others who are sick.

For additional information about the flu, please visit www.mass.gov/dph/flu or www.cdc.gov/flu.

AB PIP 3rd and 5th Grade Market Math

Every year, AB PIP STEM and Roche Bros. of Acton present two Market Math events at Roche Bros. Supermarket—one for 5th Graders and one for 3rd Graders. Both events feature an extravaganza of hands-on “super” market activities, complimented by samples, give-a-ways, and tons of fun. Market Math helps children better understand how classroom math concepts apply to the “real world”.

Market Math is a fun-filled, hands-on, math-focused evening featuring activity stations for you and your child to explore. Come try your hand at “M&M Math” or “Grocery Scanning”. All activities are based on the Acton Public School’s mathematics curriculum.

5th Grade Market Math is on Tuesday, February 5th and 3rd Grade Market Math is on Wednesday, April 3rd. Both parent-child events are held at Roche Bros. Supermarket in Acton from 4:30–7:30 PM. So come with your child and have a good time! Thank You so much in advance and we look forward to seeing you at Roche Bros. Supermarket!

Learn more about AB PIP STEM, 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 more information and meeting dates (new volunteers are always welcome) or to preview the math games, visit www.actonpip.org.

CORI Forms

There are a lot of volunteer activities this time of year in the classrooms, field trips, Sloyd, etc. If you did not update your CORI form sometime last year (2012), please stop by the office and fill one out. All volunteers are required by State law to have an updated CORI form on file. If you aren't sure that you have an updated CORI, you can call the office to check to make sure you are updated. New CORIs are good for 3 years so won't expire until June 2015.

Fundraiser for Route 111 Playground

This year the Student Council is spearheading the fundraising to update the Route 111 playground. The Student Council will be collecting money for the Route 111 playground. There is a collection jar in the lobby which will be there until the end of February. This is a direct donation appeal, so donations can be put in the jar in the lobby. Donations of any size are appreciated!

