

McCarthy-Towne Bulletin

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Slip Sliding into February

by David Krane, McT Principal

This has certainly been a New England January: messy and very cold. In spite of this, though, we've been lucky with only two snow days. There is also a new meteorological term to add to our growing list, the Polar Vortex. This is indeed a descriptive name... it sounds ferocious and the cold certainly matched the name. Indoor recess was getting very stale, however, for both students and adults and so we welcome the comparatively balmy temperatures of 35°!

We have also just completed three 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 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.

Last week, we had our Kindergarten Night here at McT. This is my fifth year to lead our Kindergarten Evening and each year it becomes more of a pleasure. This year, the Kindergarten Team assembled a movie/

slideshow to present to prospective families that was absolutely phenomenal. 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 as a school. 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 all are terrific examples of who we are as a school. Thank you so much to Tracey Smith, our Parent Involvement Coordinator, Carol Chytil, our amazing Office Assistant, Astrid Trostorff, our incredible School Office Administrator, 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.

We have had many conversations as a faculty about students sharing their birthday

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Mark Your Calendar

FEBRUARY

- 13, Thursday**
Scrip orders due
PTSO Meeting, 9 AM
- 17-21**
Winter Recess
- 25, Tuesday**
Planning Meeting for
6th Grade Celebration, 7 PM
- 28, Friday**
Auction Donation forms due

MARCH

- 3, Monday**
Read Across America Day
4th Grade Star Party, 6-9 PM
- 12, Wednesday**
Early Literacy Fundraiser
at Willow Books, 6-8 PM
- 18, Tuesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 4, 5, and 6
- 19, Wednesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 5 and 6
- 22, Saturday**
McT Auction, 5:30 PM
- 24, Monday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 3 and 4
- 25, Tuesday**
MCAS Testing, Gr. 3 and 4



McCarthy-Towne is now on Facebook!

We hope this will become your "Go To" source for all school information and questions. Feel free to post pictures of artwork and grown-ups, but we are asking that you refrain from posting

pictures of children. Our McT Facebook page is open to all adult members of our community. We have created it as a "closed" group so that people from outside our community will not be able to see or post to the page. You can search "McCarthy-Towne School" or visit www.facebook.com/groups/1404961776417219 to join.

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treats with former teachers and, sometimes, apparently, siblings in other classrooms. Children can disappear from their classrooms on these “cupcake missions” for a bit too much time. It has become a distraction, especially for the receiving teacher who will often have to interrupt a lesson to accept these treats. We have decided to limit this student largesse. Children may now only offer to share cupcakes (or whatever treats they have made or purchased) with classmates or with the always-accepting office staff, which does include the Principal! Although a departure from past custom, it is a necessary break. Classroom celebrations are unaffected and children are still welcome in my office to make a choice among the many birthday prizes that we have to offer. Thanks in advance for your understanding and support in this. This new policy will go into effect immediately.

As we approach February break I feel compelled to run this message again. 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!



from Tracey Smith and Shelley Cole, PTSO Co-chairs

We have officially crossed into the second half of the year and the half-day Kindergarteners are now enjoying school on Thursdays with everyone else. We are also halfway through school tours for prospective kindergarten parents; our teachers and students do amazing things every day and it’s exciting to share with parents who are in the midst of choosing a school for their child(ren).

This past month also saw the launch of our **new McCarthy-Towne Facebook Page**. Of course, we will continue publishing the Bulletin every month and sending out weekly Howlers via email, but Facebook offers us the opportunity to communicate and share in a more timely manner. Many thanks to Sharon Metzger for creating the page and to both Sharon and Shelley Cole for providing much of its initial content. In our first two weeks we’ve added nearly 100 members! We’ve created the page as a “closed” group so that the content may only be viewed by members of our McCarthy-Towne community. This means that you must request to “join” the group before you are able to post or view. However, as long as you’re a McT parent or guardian, joining is easy—you can search for “McCarthy-Towne School” on Facebook and submit a request, or navigate directly to www.facebook.com/groups/1404961776417219. On a related note, **our next PTSO meeting will be Thursday, February 13th at 9 AM**. The new Facebook page will be one of the points for discussion. We hope you’ll join us for the meeting and discussion!

Finally, with just six weeks to go, I want to remind everyone of our upcoming Auction which will be held at the Devens Common Center on **Saturday, March 22nd**. Instructions for ordering tickets will be sent home soon. If you’ve never attended before, I encourage you to join us. It’s not only a great way for us to raise money for the school, but a really fun-filled evening that gives parents a chance to connect with other friends they may not have the chance to see often enough.

1st Grade Donation to Acton Community Supper

On Friday, December 21st the three first grade classes at McT shopped at their annual Penny Sale. This event is a first grade holiday fundraiser for the Acton Community Supper. The Penny Sale is like a yard sale for kids! Everyone absolutely loves this event and it is a wonderful community building activity! This year the first graders raised \$69.17!

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.

Kindergarten Night Thank You!

from Tracey Smith, Parent Involvement Coordinator

Many thanks all who helped with the Kindergarten tours:

- My trusty tour and Information Night helpers: Mary Beilman, Carol Chytil, Shelley Cole, Susan Lerner, Lena Saetre-Grant, and Mariah Straayer;
- Sarah McBride for organizing all of the fabulous Hospitality volunteers who provided refreshments for the Parent Information evening;
- And finally, all our students and Student Council members who did an incredible job representing our school during the evening information session: Audrey Brown, Kyla Callison, Hana Chytil, Julia DeFoe, Sophie DeFoe, Emma Gearan, Jordan Gottesman, Clark Hanlon, Carla Ledebouer-Cid, Matthew Liu, Amelie Mendelsohn, Ash Niemann, Riley Smith, Henry Spero, Natasha Steiner, Abigail Straayer, Luke Thacker, Anthony Tyler and Ben Verner.

2014 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 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 and 4: March 24 and 25

Grades 5 and 6: March 18 and 19

English Language Arts Composition (Grade 4)

March 18

Mathematics (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6)

May 6 and 7

Science, Technology & Engineering (Grade 5)

May 12 and 13



Auction Donations Needed!

The McCarthy-Towne auction is March 22nd... less than two months away! Coming soon you will be able to purchase your tickets online, select your dinner choice and begin to preview the donations as they come in! Watch for the announcement in our special Auction Howler and on the new McT Facebook page. We hope ye can come!

The auction committee is still looking for some more fun and exciting donations. Here are a few different ways that you can donate.

Donate a Good or Service: We appreciate all donations from big-ticket items to small unique ones.

Donate to a Class Basket: Contact these parents if you can contribute to a themed basket from your class:

- Mariah Straayer (mariahstraayer@yahoo.com) for Kindergarten, 3rd, 4th or 6th grades
- Jessie Busiek (jshanebusiek@yahoo.com) for 1st or 5th grades
- Mimi Kirkman (mimikirkman@yahoo.com) for 2nd grade

Student Donations: We're looking for 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade students to donate special skills or services they may have.

The deadline for submitting Auction Donation Forms is Friday, February 28. Forms can be found at www.mctptso.org/auction/. Donated items will be collected March 16-19. If you have questions regarding donations please contact Christine Kobelski (cmk190@yahoo.com.)

As always If you have any questions or would like to help with the auction in any way, please contact our auction co-chairs: Jen Mabardy (jennifermabardy@comcast.net) or Michele Caterina (michelecaterina1@gmail.com).

6th Annual Story Time with McCarthy-Towne Teachers and Staff



Come to Willow Books in Acton on Wednesday, March 12 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 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.

Healthier U.S. School Challenge Award

The joint school committees celebrated the presentation of Healthier U.S. School Challenge awards—a national award sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture to recognize excellence in nutrition and physical activity.

Food Services Director, Kirsten Nelson, and Katie Millett, from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, handed out plaques and banners to Food Services Staff from each of the Acton Public Schools. McCarthy-Towne, Douglas, Conant and Merriam received a bronze award and Gates received silver. Each four-year award is valid through 2017. Great Job!

Calling All Parents of 6th Graders!

There will be a general information meeting on **Tuesday, February 25 at 7 PM** in the Faculty Lounge to discuss plans for the 6th grade celebration that will occur in June. There are many ways—big and small—to be involved.

Upcoming CPAC Performances

CPAC (McT’s Cultural and Performing Arts Committee) has two new chairs this year. Please welcome Sandra Hinds and Pam Hippensteele. Ann Budner is transitioning off the committee as this is her last year at McCarthy-Towne—thank you, Ann!

CPAC schedules varied performances throughout the year. We have a lot going on this spring!

Jeff Davis, American Songwriter

Jeff Davis, an award winning performer, collector and interpreter of traditional American folk music, will be performing “Massachusetts!” on Thursday, February 27. He will give two shows, 9:30 AM for grades 3–4 and then 10:45 AM for grades 5–6. Jeff helps students experience the history and geography of Massachusetts through instruments, music, and song. This program ties in with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

Li Liu, Chinese Acrobat

We will welcome Li Liu to perform “Traditions of Chinese Acrobatics” for the entire school in two performances on Thursday, March 27. The first show is at 9:45 AM and the second show at 11 AM.

The performance includes demonstrations of hand balancing, plate spinning, artistic cycling, foot juggling, ribbon dancing, and the manipulation of Chinese water bowls and Chinese yo-yos. Students will get a glimpse of Chinese culture and learn a few basic phrases in Li Liu’s native Mandarin. If you’d like to see Li Liu in action visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFaDFwshOmY.

Ian Gendreau, African Drummer

CPAC is excited to try something new this year—an artist in residence. On Friday, April 11, Ian Gendreau will be leading three African drumming workshops—one for each second grade class. Entitled “African Drumming Comes Alive,” this residency will definitely bring to life the Ghana unit of study.

Students will receive hands-on experience with Kpanlogo, a drumming and singing tradition of the Ga people, and will learn about African musical concepts such as polyrhythm, the importance of community in a drumming ensemble, and the role of music in everyday life. The culminating event is a concert performed by all of the students participating in the residency.

CPAC sincerely thanks the generous McT parents who make our programs possible! If you have any questions about CPAC, please contact either Sandra Hinds (sarohinds@verizon.com) or Pam Hippensteele (phippensteele@gmail.com).

Lip Sync Extravaganza: Save the Date!

Our annual Lip Sync Extravaganza is scheduled for Saturday, April 5th from 4:30-6:30 PM. This popular event is open to all McT students. Participants choose a song, determine if they wish to perform individually or with a group, create choreography, and perform their act on stage at McT.



Now is the time for your child to start thinking about what song to perform and whether they want to perform individually or in a group. Be creative with song choices and choreography! Introduce your kids to new musical genres: you might find they enjoy music from the 60s, 70s 80s, or country, Broadway musicals or international hits. PLEASE check the lyrics before students start practicing to make sure they are family-friendly and elementary school appropriate. Sometimes we think songs are okay, but when we read the lyrics, we realize they are not suitable for young children. Over the past few years, we have had to say no to a few songs and ask the participants to choose a new song. Lyrics can be found for free online at www.metrolyrics.com.

The Lip Sync Sign-up Form with rules and requirements will be sent home in backpacks on Friday, February 28. **The form, written lyrics and music will be due on March 14.** Lip Sync Rules and Requirements, 2014 Sign up Form and the 2013 Program can be found on the PTISO website at www.mctptso.org/fundraising/lip-sync.

Spring Cleaning?

February might be a little early to start spring cleaning but keep McT in your thoughts when you start to purge unwanted items. Mark your calendars! **On Saturday, May 10 McCarthy-Towne will be holding a giant school-wide yard and bake sale to benefit the McT PTISO.** Anyone can support the fundraiser by donating goods, posting signs, or helping with drop-off or day-of-sale tasks.

Volunteers get first dibs on the treasures! So if you would like to be part of this fun and popular event please contact Julie (julieannweir@yahoo.com or 978-415-9347).

Hospitality Thank You!

Thank you to Carol Chytil, Janie Doherty, Ann Iandiorio, Christine Kobelski, Rebecca MacNeill, Debbie Walz, Cura Pfefferkorn, Natasha Venti, Lara Maira, Bridget Chamberas, Sharon Metzger, Liz Dorsey, Jen Pratt, and Kim Beers for all of their help providing everything that was needed to help make the Kindergarten Information Night a success!

Read Across America Day—March 3rd Celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday!

You could not, would not, want to miss a celebration such as this... McCarthy-Towne School will be participating in the 17th annual *Read Across America Day* on Monday, March 3. Our school will be raising money to purchase picture books and CD's (to be recorded by McT students) to be donated to the CASE Program at McT and the Acton Housing Authority. Students and staff are encouraged to donate 50¢ (any amount is gratefully accepted) to support this worthy cause. There will also be lots of fun Dr. Seuss activities and stories to fill this special day!

Thank you for making *Read Across America Day* such a special event at McCarthy-Towne School! If you have any questions or would like to make an additional contribution, please contact Sharon Ryan, *McT Reading Specialist*.

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.actionforhealthykids.org, www.eatright.org, or www.chopchopmag.org

Workout Wednesdays

Many of you were part of the McT Mileage Club this fall, logging hundreds of morning laps in the recess area. The Mileage Club's winter cousin, Workout Wednesday, has just begun to bring a fitness opportunity on these cold (and occasionally snowy) days. Here are some basics:

When? Workout Wednesdays will take place on... you guessed it... Wednesdays, 7:45–8:15 AM! We started last week and will continue through April 2nd.

Where? We will meet 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.

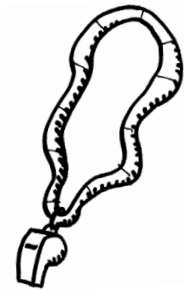
Who is in Charge? Dave James will be coordinating Workout Wednesday; Chris Hanlon will help and organize parent volunteers.

How are Workout Wednesdays Different from McT Mileage Club? Instead of laps, we will be doing circuit workouts with many exercise stations, each lasting from 30–50 seconds. Exercises will focus on upper and lower body strength and cardiovascular activity.

There won't be charts, lap counting, or foot tokens for Workout Wednesdays.

What do You Need to do to Participate?

- Please complete a registration sheet (available in the office or when you come to your first session).
- Send your children in active clothes. We will be indoors for all sessions.
- Consider sending a quick snack or drink. After the vigorous activities, your children would profit from a bit of nutrition on their way to class.
- Consider helping on a regular or semi-regular basis. Parents are welcome to come and participate as well.



Have any other questions or thoughts? Contact Chris Hanlon (hanlonchristopher@hotmail.com or 734-904-1061).

Keep Sending in Donelan's Receipts



Keep sending in those receipts! **Please keep saving your Donelan's receipts through March 31, 2014.** This wonderful program allows McCarthy-Towne to earn FREE supplies. Last year we earned over \$1,000 just from parents turning in their receipts! 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, 2013 and March 31, 2014 are eligible for the program.

Fourth Grade Star Party

Save the date for the 12th annual 4th Grade Star Party! This is a chance for fourth graders and their parents to meet amateur astronomers and get a peek at the night sky using telescopes and binoculars. **The event is scheduled for Monday, March 3 from 6-9 PM** at the Parker Damon Building. Cloud dates are March 4th and 5th. Several planets will be visible, as well as the Orion Nebula and various galaxies. Both indoor and outdoor astronomy activities are planned.

