



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186

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To: Milton Public Schools Parents, Guardians, Faculty & Staff
From: Mary C. Gormley, Superintendent of Schools
Re: E-Update, Friday, December 11, 2009

“Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.” (Emilie Buchwald)

In this season of giving, it should be said that the best gift a parent can give their child is the gift of reading. There is nothing more important to assure a child’s success in school than for a parent to read to their young children every day, to model reading for pleasure at home; and to encourage older children to read for pleasure.

Parents serve as the first and most important role model in their children’s lives. When parents themselves read at home and involve their children in reading, it goes a long way towards developing a life-long skill that will benefit your child in all areas of their education.

Reading helps to develop your child’s creativity and thinking skills and increases their ability to concentrate. It increases their vocabulary and provides a means to explore new ideas and interests. Reading helps prepare your child for real world experiences.

We all can become frazzled and stressed during this time of year. Here are some suggestions on how to incorporate reading into daily life:

- *Turn off the TV or computer for a period of time each day and read a book together.*
- *Put a bag of books in the car for children to read.*
- *Keep a basket of books on the table to read at breakfast time.*
- *Share your family stories and encourage your child to tell their own stories.*
- *Get library cards for yourself and your children and enjoy our beautiful new Milton Public Library.*

When the toys are outgrown, the electronics have broken, or the trendy clothes are no longer stylish, the pleasure of a good novel, a timely magazine or an engrossing biography will still remain with your child. It has been my experience that the best way to support student achievement is to promote, celebrate, and participate in reading for pleasure. Research supports that reading for pleasure helps improve comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, writing, and grammar. Avid readers gain background knowledge in diverse topics which helps them not only achieve in school, but provides a deeper understanding of human nature. Please enjoy the upcoming holidays and have a Healthy and Happy New Year!

School Committee Update

Tuesday, December 8:

As part of the Superintendent’s Report, the Glover Site Council, along with Principal Dr. Dore Korschun, made a presentation to discuss the recent MCAS scores. As part of an effort to improve scores, Glover teachers are using methods to target underperforming students and providing them with additional help. Other strategies include the Open Response Initiative and the Tuft’s Reader’s Workshop.

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Next, the English Curriculum Review Team presented information on how the curriculum is structured and teaching effectiveness. Martha Sherman, Elementary Coordinator and Stephanie Nephew, Middle School Humanities Coordinator talked about best-practices research and the results of a teacher survey across all levels. The lack of time for common planning was one of the themes derived from the survey, as well as the difficulty in effectively practicing differentiated teaching. The team made several recommendations, including increasing planning time and materials available to teachers. You can view their presentation under the School Committee Corner at www.miltonps.org.

School Committee members also heard from Steve Traister, Athletic Director, and Matt Gillis, School Business Administrator, about the state of finances for the athletic program. Students currently pay \$250 to participate in a sport (\$500 for hockey), which are some of the highest fees in the area. To help with the athletic budget, Kate Summer, a parent volunteer, unveiled a new outdoor banner program. Please see our item under “Fundraising” below for more information on this exciting new opportunity.

The School Committee then voted to approve the Superintendent’s Goals for the current school year, which can be viewed on the Milton Public Schools website at www.miltonps.org in the Superintendent’s Update section.

Asst. Supt. John Phelan updated the School Committee on the residency issue, which is an effort to ensure that all students attending the Milton Public Schools are legal residents of the town. Mr. Phelan reported that the collaboration between the schools and the Milton Police Department has been restructured and a part-time position has been created. This position, funded by stipend, is expected to more effectively organize the registration of new students and investigations into situations where out-of-town students might be attending our schools. Mr. Phelan reported during the 2008-2009 school year, 140 situations were investigated, which resulted in 40 students being excluded during the year and an additional 20 students being excluded during the summer registration process.

School Committee Vice-Chair Mr. Pavlicek reported on his recent attendance at the Massachusetts Association of School Committees conference. A copy of the MASC resolutions can be viewed here:

http://www.masc.org/PDF%27S/Final_Resolutions.pdf

Next, School Committee Member Mr. Huban gave a first reading on the Field Trip policy. In an effort to help parents plan for and budget for upcoming middle- and high-school field trips, the School Committee is hoping to prepare an “evergreen” list of planned field trips for each grade level. This list is currently still under discussion and will be reviewed at the next SC meeting.

School Committee Member Ms. Kelly presented the finance subcommittee report, in which she discussed her recent meetings with the town’s Warrant Committee and the potential cuts to the school budget by the state and/or town. School Committee members discussed financial strategy, with an attempt to envision a level-dollar budget. Members predicted a grim outlook for the 2010-2011 school budget, saying the school department budget could be in “dire straits.”

The meeting closed with an announcement by School Committee Member Beirne Lovely that he will not be seeking reelection in the spring and his hope that “new blood” and perhaps, new faces would be running for his seat.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for **January 5th** at 7 p.m. in the Milton High School Library.

Curriculum Information

A group of Milton High School seniors have a new venue for some of their work. One of the town’s newest websites, <http://02186.mytownmatters.com> is working closely with students in Senior Seminar, an honors-level history course. As part of their coursework, students are assigned a news topic and must write a persuasive essay, or “editorial-like” article. The students’ work is posted to the website under the “Opinion” section and can be read by anyone who visits the site. A new editorial is posted every Sunday by a different student. This project is the result of collaboration between Ms. Barbara Wright, MHS Humanities Department Head, the students of Senior Seminar, and Frank Schroth, a Milton resident and parent of two Milton High graduates, who created and maintains the website.

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Our music department has wonderful news to share. Recently, 22 students were selected to participate in the Eastern District Senior Festival and nine of them will go on to audition for places in the Massachusetts All State Festival.

Congratulations to the following students, selected for Eastern District Senior Festival: in jazz - Willie Archibald in band - Clara Heiden, Laura Hess, Rebecca Simms, Steven Staffa in orchestra - Amelie Carpenter, Blake Daniel, Liz Mahon, Charlie Rosmarin in chorus - Garith Christopher, Melissa Donovan, Liana Gineitis, Adam Hanna, Mckendy Jean-Gilles, Nancy Killoran, Rebecca Liberman, Kelli Neville, Cristina Ruscito, Catherine Spino, Lauren Stafford, Braedy Taugher, Conor Walsh.

Additional congratulations to the 9 students who will also audition for All State in January: in jazz- Willie Archibald in band - Steven Staffa in orchestra - Charlie Rosmarin in chorus - Melissa Donovan, Liana Gineitis, Nancy Killoran, Rebecca Liberman, Kelli Neville and Conor Walsh.

Health News

The Milton Public School nurses will be holding a *seasonal* flu vaccine clinic on **Saturday, December 12th** at the Pierce Middle School. Students in grades 6-8 are requested to come with a parent or guardian between the hours of 9 and 11 a.m. Students in grades 9 -12 students are requested to come with a parent or guardian between the hours of noon and 2 p.m. Permission forms must be completed by parent or guardian that day at the clinic site. The district has received 400 doses and the goal is to distribute all of the vaccine that day. Contact Margaret Gibbons, Director of Nurses, at 617-696-4470 ext. 1 with any questions. Those seeking a *H1N1* vaccine are encouraged to call the Milton Board of Health's flu hotline at 617-898-4947.

Upcoming Events

In our quest to infuse our classrooms with a wide variety of books and literature, we are asking parents to donate gently used children's books that they are no longer using to the schools. French and English Books will be accepted. We ask that you box these gently used books and drop them off at the designated locations on **January 12, 2010**. If parents of Middle or High School students have elementary aged books, please feel free to drop them at any one of our elementary schools. Our schools will accept donations between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on January 12, 2009. If you have any questions you may contact Martha Sherman or Stephanie Nephew. Book Drop Off Locations: Collicot: Cafeteria- Rear Entrance; Cunningham: Gym- Front Entrance; Glover: Gym Entrance; Tucker: Gym – Playground Entrance; PMS: Front Lobby; MHS: Front Lobby.

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Parents of elementary, middle and high school students are encouraged to attend the upcoming Internet Safety Night, scheduled for Wednesday, **January 13th** at 7 p.m. in the Charles Winchester Auditorium at Milton High School. This free, adults-only forum is an excellent resource for parents. It will cover responsible computer use, chat room predators, online profiles and personal information, threatening and harassing instant messages, and social networking sites. The forum is sponsored by Norfolk District Attorney William R. Keating in conjunction with the Milton Public Schools.

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Save the Date! Kindergarten Information Night will be held **January 28th** at 7 p.m. in the Charles Winchester Auditorium. Parents of children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2010 are strongly encouraged to attend this event. Please fill out a pre-registration form in advance of this meeting, available at www.miltonps.org under the "Upcoming Events" section. Children must be 5 by September 1st in order to attend kindergarten.

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Milton Foundation for Education

On November 21st, the Milton Foundation for Education sponsored the 11th Annual Celebration for Education, and it truly was a celebration in every sense of the word. This festive event not only celebrated excellence in education in our town, but it also celebrated the generosity of our sponsors, the hard work and dedication of over 100 volunteers, the support of hundreds of businesses and individuals who donated items to our auctions, and the unwavering commitment and enthusiasm of the faculty and administrators of the Milton public school system.

The MFE would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this year's Celebration. Thanks to you, they raised over \$100,000! In addition to funding the on-going work of the MFE (including the MPS grant writer's position and the Outstanding Teacher Awards), this money will fund enrichment grants in all six of the town's schools. These grants will fund such things as robotics, master music classes, media production workshops, independent language study and artists-in-residence. Initiatives such as these are simply beyond the reach of the school system's budget, yet they are the very things that inspire students to reach beyond traditional classroom learning. Many thanks to this year's Celebration Co-Chairs Erika Donahue, Margaret Eberhardt, and Denise Queally. Congratulations on a job well done!

News Around Town

The Friends of the Milton Public Library are pleased to offer another holiday shopping option. They offer great books at great prices in the Friends Book Shop on the lower level of the library. Shop hours are Tuesdays from 10 to 2 p.m.; Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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We are pleased to promote our ongoing collaboration with the Milton Council on Aging, known as "Adopt a Senior Citizen for the Winter." This is a program which pairs a Milton High School student with one of our town's senior citizens. The student must commit to shoveling a path from the front door to the street within 24 hours after a snowstorm, so the senior has a path for safety issues. So far, 14 MHS students have signed up and will receive community service hours. Although more volunteers are still needed, we are pleased with the response so far. Please contact the Milton Council on Aging at 617-898-4893 or email Mary Ann Sullivan at masullivan@townofmilton.org if you would like to volunteer or put your name on the list of seniors who need shoveling.

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Animal lovers, take note: the Milton Animal League will hold its annual holiday party on Sunday, **December 13th** from 2 to 4 pm at Cunningham Hall. Santa will be on hand, for photos with children or pets, and pet-related items will be on sale. The Milton Animal League welcomes dogs on leashes and cats or other small pets in a carrier. All proceeds go to benefit the Milton Animal League's mission to aid homeless animals at the Milton Animal Shelter.

Fundraising News

For the first time ever, we have authorized the selling of sponsorship banners throughout the Milton outdoor sports complex. This prime location is used not only by the high school teams but also a wide range of private leagues, camps, and sports organizations throughout the New England area. Each banner will go up in March 2010 and remain prominently displayed year-round. These banners are not only a great way to give your business or organization tremendous visibility in our community, they're also a very necessary means in helping us close the significant athletic budget deficit caused by the current economic circumstances. Please help us

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ensure that we can continue our proud tradition of high school athletics in Milton. To order a banner or to get more information, please contact Milton High School Parent Volunteer Kate Sumner at 866-748-3700 or email kate@gofullcontact.com To view the banners or download an order form, visit the following links:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/miltonoutdoorflyer.pdf>
<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/outsideorderform.pdf>

Athletics

Our winter athletic season is off and running! We are fielding 10 teams, including girls and boys' basketball; girls' and boys' hockey; a ski team; indoor track and wrestling. To see a full schedule, please visit the MHS Athletics page at <http://www.miltonps.org/departments-mhs-athletic.php>.

Ambassador Page

Milton High School: We are proud to announce that Milton High School art teacher Karen Hughes was recently notified that she has received her National Board Certification. This distinguished honor comes after months of preparation. Ms. Hughes was required to compile a written and video portfolio in four areas: Large Group Learning; Small Group Learning; Learning Over Time; and Documented Personal Accomplishments. She sent her portfolios to the board in March and was then required to sit for an exam before June to test content knowledge. Only 40% of teachers pass this exam their first time, but we are pleased to report that Ms. Hughes was one of the 40%. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a group dedicated to advancing quality teaching and learning. Ms. Hughes joins six other Milton Public School faculty members who have earned their certifications. (see below)

Pierce Middle School: English teacher Cate Friedman also got the fantastic news that she has received her National Board Certification. We are very proud of Ms. Friedman's accomplishment and the work that she put into earning this honor. Ms. Friedman joins her Pierce colleagues, Patricia Turner, Owen McElhinney, Ellen Gerhet, Christine Charbonneau and Barbara Perry, all of whom earned NBPTS certifications. This is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Elementary: We are very grateful to the second grade classes at Glover Elementary School. These students recently held a Craft Sale to raise money for the Milton Food Bank. Each class has created a winter-themed craft, and sold them to parents and friends. Not only did these students learn math skills by handling the money for this event, they also created a wonderful sense of community within their school. Hats off to these students and their teachers!

Volunteer: Milton High School recently held auditions for the Eastern District Senior Festival. We would like to thank the many, many MHS students who volunteered to work at the audition, as well as the many parents and FAME members who volunteered countless hours on this day. Thank you to Rebecca Cherry and Lauren Kapalka who adjudicated all day. Thank you to Dawn Sykes and Patricia Ostrem who ran around all day fixing and helping with equipment. Thank you to Gary Good for volunteering to be the Band Manager--organizing the auditions for band all day. Thank you to Rebecca Damiani for volunteering to be the Assistant Coordinator for the entire festival--managing the activities for all parties involved.