



Morris School October Newsletter

October 2011

Calendar Highlights

- 10-18 Morris School Council 6:00 p.m.
- 10-18 PTO 7:00 p.m.
- 10-21 Family Fun Night
- 10/28—Prof Dev/NO SCHOOL
- 11-11 Veterans Day/No School
- 11-22 Report Cards
- 11/23—11/25 Thanksgiving vacation, No School

REMINDER NOTES

Early Dismissals. If your child needs to be dismissed early for an appointment please be sure to send a note in to the teacher that morning. Thanks!

Drop off/pick up reminder: Please stay in your vehicle when dropping off and picking up your students for safety reasons.

Keep Sending in Lunch Money! We will credit your child's account at any time.

CHORUS BEGINS AT 8:00 A.M. Please do not send in siblings to wait in the main lobby before 8:20.



From the Principal's Office:

It was great to see so many parents at our recent Open House event. Open House is always a wonderful way for parents to learn about the school program and meet the teachers who influence their children's lives. At Open House I occasionally have parents ask what they can do to help their kids do better in school.

My answers usually don't include flashcards or computer-based reading drills, and sometimes this surprises people. In years of working with kids of all ages, I have come to see children as learning machines. They are wired to soak up experience that will prepare them to be functional and informed adults. Another thing I have learned is that children love to spend time with their parents and oth-

er caring adults. While we spend time together, our children and young friends are constantly learning about the world by watching us and using us as models. This may seem a bit obvious, but in our busy lives we can overlook the importance of some very simple yet very valuable learning opportunities.

Talk: Your kids want to know about your childhood, your life, your favorite foods and games, etc. Talk to your kids frequently, preferably making a special time or place for talking that is just between you and your child. Take turns telling and listening and asking questions. This seemingly simple activity is actually very useful for teaching your child the protocols of verbal communication.

Play: Studies are showing more and more that unstructured imaginative play serves a very important function in helping children to understand their world. Such activity allows kids to "practice" communication skills and social interactions in a safe context. Organized sports are great for physical development and developing a child's ability to be a team player, but don't let sports or other structured pursuits eclipse the need for kids to participate in unstructured creative play. Not into playing transformers or dressing up like a princess? That's okay. You can facilitate creative play by simply giving kids the time and the space to let their imaginations wander (cont.)

PTO Kids' Park Rocks the Squeeze!!

A big Morris Elementary PTO **thank you** goes out to everyone who participated in the **3rd Annual Kids Park at Apple Squeeze!** Despite the threat of rain, this year was a huge success! Hundreds

of kids & their families came to enjoy the pony rides, jumpy slide, carnival games, face-painting, tattoos, treats & more. All proceeds raised will help support programs for Morris students throughout the

year. Special thanks to all the kid & parent volunteers who donated their time & energy to help it run smoothly-- we couldn't do it without you!

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Sign up for Price Chopper Tools for Schools

If you shop at Price Chopper, sign your card up for the Tools for Schools. Once you [sign up](#), everything you purchase at Price Chopper with your AdvantEdge Card earns points to help your school get a larger share of the \$500,000 in FREE equipment to be distributed through the Tools for Schools program. Not sure if you're signed up? - If you don't have a card, visit the Customer Service Desk at any Price Chopper location. Register on line at pricechopper.com/toolsforschools—school code is **14049**.

Morris School Council Seeks Membership Nominations

The Morris School Council is an advisory group to the principal made up of parents, staff and a community representative. The group is charged with helping the principal in the creation of an annual school improvement plan setting targets for academic improvement and other improvement that makes the school a better place for learning. The Council seeks nominees for at least two parent seats. Names of interested parties should be forwarded to Mr. Lee with a brief description of the person's reason for interest in council membership. The School Council generally meets 6-7 times a year on Tuesday evenings.

Health and Wellness Tips

Busy kids need plenty of sleep and kids who get the right amount of sleep learn more in school! Please help to ensure that your child is ready for school by seeing they get about 9 hours. It makes a big difference at school!

It's true! Breakfast is the most important meal! Children learn better when they have had a good balanced breakfast before school. Talk to your child about their healthy breakfast favorites and make breakfast a priority.

Healthy minds are in healthy bodies. Please limit your child's sedentary or screen time. Make sure they are engaged in regular physical activities that provide exercise. For more fun, make your kids part of your exercise routine.

Reading News!

Independent reading significantly improves a child's reading ability. Vastly increasing the amount of minutes children spend reading each year can have a profound impact on a child's comprehension, reading fluency, vocabulary, writing, and even math skills. The more kids read, the more they want to read. Reading becomes easier and more enjoyable the more we do it. A study by Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding indicated

that the average fifth grader reads just 4.6 minutes per day. If those same children increased their reading time by just 10 minutes per day, the result would be an increase in relative reading time of 313% and a word increase of close to 300,000 words read per year.

Giving children the power of choice in their reading can be very motivating. As often as possible, allow children to choose books that are interesting to them and easy to read independently. Sometimes reluctant readers have a hard time making book choices. Please let me know if your child

needs any help choosing books and I would be happy to make some suggestions.

~Mrs. Fisher, Reading Specialist



PTO News Continued...

Many thanks as well to our community sponsors:

All Star Excavation
Aspinwall Equestrian Center
Athena's Restaurant
Berkshire Bagels
Carr Hardware-Lee
Clifford Oil Co., Inc.
Hoff's Mobil
J.Harwood Architect
Kimball Nursing Care Center

Loeb's Foodtown
Lucky's Ice Cream & Grill
Lucky Nails-Lee
Mazzeo's Ristorante
Overmeade Farm
Piretti Real Estate
Studio Two
tee-shirtstogo.com
Toole Insurance
tricia mccormack photography
Zabian's Jewelers

And last but absolutely not least--Elegant Tent and Party for the fabulous tents that kept us all happy & dry :)

Thank you all for a fabulous fall community event!!

-- the Morris PTO Apple Squeeze Committee: Tonya Defriest-Doerr, Jim Harwood, Sheri Mickel, Rick Digrigoli, Laura Kittross, Jody Prunier, Lisa Nelson, Renee Far, Liz Goodman, Jennifer Reinholt, and Karen Romeo Leger.

From the Principal's Office continued....

Take them places: The supermarket, the carwash, the post office- all these places can be fertile ground for learning. Encourage questions when you go places asking your child, "do you know what they do here?" The answer can lead to other questions which will result in lots of learning about where our food comes from, where our water goes and why a stamp costs money. How much money? What does forty-three cents look like? One tip regarding these learning excursions- if you can, take only one child at a time. This will make the time feel more special for the child and it will be easier to make it a learning experience.

Get outside: Environmentalist/author Richard Louv in his book Last Child in the Woods suggests that many in the current generation of children may suffer from "nature deficit disorder". While I don't con-

sider myself qualified to identify or diagnose a disorder, I would agree that children today spend way more time inside than we did a generation ago. As a child I remember, getting home from school so I could get outside to ride bikes, build forts, go fishing, and explore the outdoors. When I talk to children today I am often amazed by the time they spend indoors. Kids gain confidence and an appreciation for their natural world by playing outdoors, and more outdoor play is generally physical and healthier for growing bodies.



Of course there's a lot more parents can do to help their kids with specific academic goals, and I don't wish to diminish the importance of daily reading and family math. But we live in a busy era when we sometimes forget the value of simple interactions with lots of learning value. I hope readers find this a useful reminder. TL



CORI FORM REMINDER

Field trips and volunteer opportunities can sneak up on you—please make sure that you have submitted your CORI form with a copy of your driver's license. The process can take up to two weeks to complete. It can be downloaded off our website. Don't miss out!!!

Math News!

Mathematics goes beyond simply numbers and calculations. Math is about recognizing and extending patterns, problem solving, estimating, and so much more. Here are some suggestions to encourage your children to be good mathematicians:

(adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education)

Count forward and backwards from different starting places. Try "skip counting" by 2's, 5's, 10's, etc.

Measure items found around the house. You may even want to try measuring items using other items. (e.g. "How many place-mats long is the kitchen table?" Then estimate and measure.)

Compare and organize household items by size and shape.

Ask your child to draw a picture of a room in your house, the school, or a map of your neighborhood.

Talk about the likelihood that something will happen. (e.g. "How likely is it that we'll walk the dog today, that it will snow in June, that the sun will rise before 7:00 tomorrow morning?")

Include your child in everyday activities that involve math – making purchases, measuring ingredients, counting out plates and utensils for dinner.

Play games and do puzzles with your child that involve math.

They may focus on direction or time, logic and reasoning, sorting, or estimating.

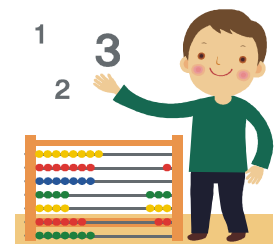
When your child is trying to solve a problem, ask what he or she is thinking. If your child seems puzzled, ask him or her to tell you what doesn't make sense.

Talking about their ideas and how they reach solutions helps

children learn to reason mathematically.

Be positive about your own math abilities. Try to avoid saying "I was never good at math" or "I never liked math". Reinforce the idea with your child that everyone has the ability to succeed in math.

Mrs. Mary Cherry, Math Specialist



Vocabulary from Señorita Gonzalez.....

¡Hola Padres! Reinforce español at home with these common greetings (saludos):

Hola—hi

¿Cómo estás? - how are you?

Muy bien—very well

Gracias—thank you

Adiós—goodbye

Get this newsletter via e-mail or the web. Check our website or call/email Jill Barnoski with your email address and she will send the newsletter to you electronically. Contact Jill at 637-5522 x 2171 or jbarnoski@lenoxps.org



Appropriate Dress. Fall is here and that means winter isn't far behind. Please be sure to remind your children to wear warm clothes—layers are best. Be prepared for outdoor play with coats, hats, gloves. Also, please send in an extra set of clothes in case of spills or wet weather!!

Constitution Day Thank You

On Friday, September 16, Morris students celebrated Constitution Day with our annual read-aloud event. Students in all grades were treated to a book shared by a member of the school community. Morris School would like to thank reading specialist Alison Fisher, LMMHS Dean of Students Brian Cogswell, School Committee Members Jeremiah Ames and Veronica Fenton, State Representative Smitty Pignatelli, and Executive Assistant Laura Saldarini for sharing the importance of The Constitution with our students.



State Representative Smitty Pignatelli

BOX TOP\$ EQUAL EXTRA CASH

Please remember to **keep collecting Box Tops**. The Cheerios box in the library window just inside the front door of the school is the collection box. Since they must be submitted in bundles of 50, if you have 50 or more, it would be helpful to submit just 50 in one Ziploc (write 50 on the outside) and submit the rest in a separate Ziploc. Also, please visit the Box-Tops website at www.boxtops4education.com.

More notes to keep you connected.....

From the Music Room

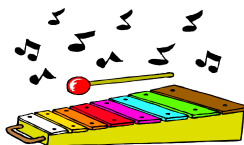


In support of our Positive School Culture Initiative, students learned a song based on the Golden Rule called "Treat Others". We sang it for the first time together at our first All School Morning Meeting.

First graders were excited to begin learning how to use the Orff instruments. These pitched percussion instruments were designed by German composer Carl Orff to be used in the music classroom. They allow students to experience a full ensemble sound at an early elementary level. We have Xylophones, Metalophones, and Glockenspiels. First graders learned to sing and play "Teddy Bear".

We have record numbers of students in band and chorus this year! More than half the fourth grade class is taking instrument lessons. I've created Band Family email lists in the hopes of better school/home communication. If you have not given me your email and would like to be on the list please send me a message. mpollard@lenoxps.org

Our choruses are off to a strong start, but there is still room for more singers if anyone is interested. Grades 2 and 3 meet on Tuesdays @ 8:00 a.m. Grades 4 and 5 meet on Thursdays @ 8:00 am. Concerts are **January 10 and June 11.** Save the dates!



Students Taken on Vacation

As is the case each year, we receive questions from parents concerning the assignment of school work to be done while on vacation. Please consider the following guidelines when taking your child out of school during a non-school vacation time:

1. the loan of textbooks is permissible.
2. Special assignments for the child to do while away are not to be given
3. We assume no obligation to grade any assignments presumed to have been done by the child during his/her absence.
4. Upon return, the burden of making up work missed during the absence is upon the child.
5. Except for the inevitable losses incurred as a result of absence from scheduled classes and the failure to make up work missed, the school will not impose any penalty upon the child or parent as a consequence of the absence.