



Morris School October Newsletter

October 2009

Calendar Highlights

- Columbus Day 10-12
- Morris School Council 10-21 6:00 p.m.
- Picture re-takes 10-20
- Lenox School Committee 10-19 7:00 p.m.
- PTO 10-20 7:00 p.m.
- Family Fun Night 10-23

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:

We are off to a great start to the 2009-2010 school year. The new school day has developed into routine and students and teachers have had a very busy month of learning.

Teachers and special educators serving grades K-3 recently participated in some intense training on the use of **universal assessments** as a means to measure growth in students' reading abilities. Teachers at different grade levels were trained in how to apply specific probes to measure reading fluency, comprehension, and mastery of letter sounds. The use of universal assessments and "benchmarking" is intended to provide a quick but detailed snapshot of where students may be succeeding or struggling as readers. The system, known as AIMSweb, also allows us to set growth goals and measure the effectiveness of instructional inter-

ventions. This training, which will span the 2009-2010 school year, is made possible by a federal stimulus grant for education.

A series of grade level morning meetings will focus on **social-emotional wellness** throughout the school year. Guidance Counselor John Evans met with students in grades 2-5 during the month of September to explore qualities of friendship and discuss how Morris can be a place where these qualities come out in every student. At several of these meetings students were asked to generate a list of the qualities that make good friends and friendships. The list is currently on display on a bulletin board in the main hallway and includes these words: Kindness, Respect, Trust, Loyalty, Sharing, Honesty, Listening, and Caring. Par-

ents can reinforce the friendship lessons learned at school by discussing the meaning of these words with your child. Feel free to add to our list as well!

It's butterfly time! In a number of classrooms in varied grades students and teachers are enjoying the transformation of caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. For many monarch butterflies, the transformation is a start to an incredible journey of as much as 4000 miles that will end in Mexico. I found a great website that allows you to track their migration and gives a lot of fascinating information about these amazing creatures. If your child has talked about their butterfly experience at Morris and you'd like to learn more, check out:

www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch (continued....)

PTO Kids' Park a Hit at Apple Squeeze!!!

The PTO wants to thank all those who helped make the Morris PTO Kids' Park at Apple Squeeze an enormous success! Hundreds of families attended the event, held Saturday, September 26th in Lilac Park. Children spent the day playing carnival games,

zipping down a giant slide, riding ponies, hula hooping, kickboxing, running obstacle courses, and more. It was a party in the park! The event raised a significant sum that will help support programs for Morris students this year.

We are grateful to everyone who supported the PTO by bringing their children to the Kids' Park and to the more than 50 parents and grandparents who sold tickets, hawked concessions, painted faces, ran games, or otherwise helped at the

Parent Volunteers Sought to Level Books

Research clearly shows that young readers experience the most growth in their reading ability when they read books that are at the “just right” level— not too difficult, not too easy. We have assessments at school that tell young readers where they are at in terms of their reading ability but our collection of books is not leveled in such a way that students can easily choose a book that is right for them. We seek parent help to participate in training of ½ hour and a commitment of at least four hours over the course of several months to help level and label the books in our student collection.

If you have some time and an interest in helping with this task, please contact Mrs. Fisher, Morris Reading Specialist.

PTO NEWS Continued



event. We owe a special thank you to the area organizations and businesses who also made the event possible: to KIMBALL FARMS RETIREMENT COMMUNITY for partnering with us on the event and providing the carnival games; to Brian Puntin and ASPINWALL EQUESTRIAN CENTER for providing the pony rides; to CLIFFORD OIL for underwriting the bouncy slide; to ELEGANT TENTS for the large tent; to RHYTHMS and ALBANY BERKSHIRE BALLET for entertainment; and to CHURCH ON THE HILL for keeping our electricity running and our fishing pond full.

If you would like to help plan next year's Kids' Park, please contact Joan Goldberg-Munch or Margaret Keller.

Check out these cool science resources that your child can explore on the Internet

This site is chock-full of some of the most fun science activities ever assembled. www.exploratorium.edu

Find interactive games galore on geography, astronomy, and zoology. <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Games>

Remember that old game Operation? Kids can play a virtual version online at this site, while learning how different systems of the body work. This fun site, from London's Centre of the Cell,

will keep school kids (and their parents) entertained and informed.

www.centreofthecell.org/centre/?page_id=301

This great resource for families offers dozens of safe, educational home experiments using materials easily found around the house. It's divided into categories, including water, structures, the five senses, patterns, life sciences, forces and energy, engineering, and chemistry. <http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/sci>. Check out the cool resources available at this site

from the land down under, the National Science and Technology Centre in Australia.

www.questacon.edu.au/activities

This great site lets kids have fun learning through experimenting discovering things like how polar bears stay warm and the ecological consequences of oil spills.

www.sandiegozoo.org/education/

Source: National Association of Elementary School Principals

Keeping you connected.....

SEND IN EXTRA CLOTHES!

Please have your child keep extra clothes at school in case of a spill or a slip outside.



PICTURE RE-TAKE REMINDER

Judy Dias will be here in the morning on October 20 to take pictures of students that were absent on the original picture day and to do re-takes. Please be sure to send in your original package if you are requesting a re-take.

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. Don't miss out!!!

From the Principal's Office continued....

A few parents and a lot of students have asked me about **team games** at recess. Some may recall that in past years we have had to limit and even end the playing of team games due to problems of time, choosing teams, not following rules, and unsporting behavior. While we no longer prohibit team games at recess, we do ask that students wishing to play a team game check with a recess supervisor first. I have asked recess supervisors to closely monitor team games to make sure it stays positive, fair, and safe. Students should be aware that in the limited time we have for recess, the goal of team games should be to practice skills and have fun. Another important rule is that everyone plays. I know that we've had to end a few matches this year that have become negative, too competitive, or were played by only a few kids who refused to share the play with others.

Students and parents are asked to understand that if a game is ended it is because the recess supervisor has determined that there is a problem. If this happens, students are asked to promptly and respectfully follow the direction of the supervisor and finish recess with another activity. Students who do not follow these guidelines may not be able to participate in future team games.

In closing, I'd like to remind parents and students of the importance of getting adequate sleep, eating breakfast, and limiting screen time. We all need varying amounts of sleep but I've always suggested 9 hours as a good minimum for children of elementary age. Breakfast really matters when it comes to learning. Talking to your children about what they eat is a good way to teach about nutrition.

Finally, time in front of the TV or computer screen is okay in limited

amounts but doesn't provide the exercise that the mind and body needs to grow.

I encourage parents to set limits and then stand firm. Your children will probably do better in school and you may find that you'll have more quality time as a family.

Tim Lee



Pre-schoolers: Setting the Stage for Learning to Read.

Many preschoolers may not show an interest in written language or books. That's okay, as children aged 2, 3, and 4 tend to live in the moment and do almost all learning through first-hand experiences. There are, however, some simple things that parents can do to help children more easily become readers when they do reach the age of reading readiness:

1. **Talk to your preschoolers often and encourage them to talk to you.** The ability to read is based largely on an understanding of language. A child who can readily discriminate and process language and take out the meaning will have an easier time when that language is presented in print.
2. **Take them places.** Much of a child's future reading comprehension is based upon prior knowledge. *Prior knowledge*

provides a foundation on which to build new concepts and understandings. A trip to the grocery store or post office or dentist can be a knowledge building bonanza if you talk about where you're going and what you'll be doing.

3. **Limit Screen Time.** Small children tend to learn through two-way interaction with their environment. TV and computer games may "teach" the alphabet or other concepts but they are no match for the learning value of actually using language with another human. Also, with TV and computer, the type of sensory input is limited to visual and auditory, leaving out kinesthetic and tactile learning, which are very important modalities for preschoolers.
4. **Read to your children:** When reading with small children,

don't worry about mastering letter sounds. Start by working on *concepts of print*: Which is the front of the book? Which is the back? What's a picture? What is print? You can show your little one that the print has meaning by tracking the words with a finger as you read. The child should see you move your finger from word to word as she hears your voice move from word to word. As your children get older you may try guiding their finger as you read the words. This is best done with books you have read a number of times.

It's important to remember that reading is a developmental process. Being a part of that process can be a rewarding experience for parents.



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

Save paper! 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, snow pants and boots!

From the Music Room



Music classes from Kindergarten through ^{grade} five are off to a lively start. We have been dancing, performing rhythm patterns, singing, and playing games. Our youngest musicians in Kindergarten enjoy the guessing game "Closet Key". They are also working on a folk dance called "The Seven Jumps Dance". First, second and third graders have begun working with the Orff instruments. Fourth and fifth graders have been working on singing in solfege, part singing and playing rhythm instruments. All of these activities work toward the goal of music literacy. Together grades two through five and I have created a Music Class Constitution. It reads as follows. We will: 1) Do our best and cooperate, 2) Be kind, 3) Listen and follow directions 4) Respect everyone and everything.

In addition to general music classes, there are approximately 50 students singing in elementary School Chorus and 60 taking instrumental lessons. The junior chorus meets on Tuesday mornings at 8:00am and the Senior Chorus meets on Thursdays at 8:00am. We work on vocal technique, part singing and music literacy, with an emphasis on choral performance skills. Our band students meet once a week during the school day in small groups. The fifth grade also meets for band rehearsal once a week. We plan to show off the fruits of our labor with a chorus/band on January 13th. The concert will include both choruses and the fifth grade band. Our fourth grade instrumentalist need more time before they will be ready to perform.

Mrs. Pollard, Music Teacher

More notes to keep you connected.....

PICTURES TAKEN OF YOUR CHILDREN

From time to time the newspaper takes photos of your children engaged in school activities. Many pictures are also taken for the yearbook.

Please let us know, in writing, if you do not wish your child's picture to be included in the yearbook or used with any newspaper stories. Without a written note specifying otherwise, we will grant permission for photos to be used as appropriate.



BOX TOP\$ EQUAL EXTRA CASH

Please remember to **keep collecting Box Tops**. This fall's mailing deadline is 10/31 so please make sure to **send them all in before 10/23**. 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 BoxTops website at www.boxtops4education.com.



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.