



Morris School Newsletter

January/February 2012

Calendar Highlights

- 1/16—Martin Luther King Day/No School
- 1/17—PTO Meeting 7pm
- 1/17—School Council 6pm
- 1/27—Game Night 6pm
- 2/1—Readers Theater
- 2/20-24—February Break
- 3/2— Family Luau Dance

REMINDER NOTES

Please continue to be dressed for winter and snow! Remember to keep that extra pair of clothes at school!



SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Please remember that our directory is intended for **private use only**, by parents, students, and staff of Morris School. Please do **not** use the names in our directory for solicitation of any purpose.

From the Principal's Office: What is SPED?

Morris teachers do a great job differentiating, or changing their instruction so children of many different abilities can participate and learn together. Sometimes students get stuck on certain concepts or skills and they may need to be helped along with some additional teaching provided by an interventionist or a Title I tutor. In other instances, the small group or individual help on skills still isn't enough to allow the child to move forward. When this is the case, teachers, specialists and support staff get together and discuss the child at a Student Support Team meeting. Based on data from skill assessments, the team may recommend interventions that are more focused or frequent. If, after all these steps, and s/he remains unable to make pro-

gress, s/he will be brought again to Student Support Team and a referral for a special education may be discussed.

Students who are persistently unable to make progress in the core curriculum, (in one area or in several areas), and who do not improve their progress with targeted instructional interventions, may be referred through a study team for a special education, (also called SPED) evaluation. This referral is made when educators suspect that a disability or handicapping condition is the cause for the lack of progress. A SPED evaluation is a comprehensive examination of the child, his or her background, their intellectual and academic functioning and the learning issues they are experi-

encing. The evaluation is a team process conducted by a school psychologist, a school adjustment counselor, a special educator, classroom teacher, and other specialists.

Once a student is referred for a SPED evaluation, strict procedures and timelines must be followed. At the end of the evaluation process a determination is made if a neurological, physical, communication or other issue exists that represents a handicapping condition. If the team determines that such a condition exists and is major cause of the student's poor growth, the student may be determined eligible for special education services.

(Continued page 2)



Reading Theater News!

On February 1, 2012 from 6:30-8:00pm, we will be holding a **Reader's Theater** event for students. All students are welcome to come and read from their favorite books, poems, plays, or even their own writing. Reader's Theater is a wonderful way for children to practice reading out loud to an audience without the

pressure of having to memorize their lines. Students can perform in groups, with family members, or individually. Throughout the month of January, I will be visiting classrooms to explain Reader's Theater to students.

I am hoping that some fifth graders may wish to take on leadership roles for this event, including helping to MC, setting and cleaning up, and organizing the order of the per-

formers. I am also looking for parent volunteers to assist with setting and cleaning up and donating snacks for the event. If you are interested in volunteering in any way, please e-mail me at

afisher@lenoxps.org.

Looking forward to an exciting night filled with great reading!
~Mrs. Fisher,
Reading Special-



From the Principal's Office continued...

The next step in the process is the development of an Individualized Education Plan or IEP. This process, done in collaboration with teachers and parents, strives to identify specific learning goals and special methods of instruction. The IEP identifies where and how services will be provided and when the student's progress will be assessed. The IEP is revisited each year and the special education student is re-assessed for eligibility every three years.

To recap, special education is a process that provides disabled students with the accommodations and specialized instruction to access a free and appropriate public education. Typically, about 10-15% of a school's enrollment will be comprised of special education students. Many of the negative stereotypes of special education have disappeared as more students with a wide variety of talents and needs have been integrated into the same classrooms. These inclusive practices in SPED are credited by some with growing acceptance of diverse abilities amongst non-disabled and disabled students alike.

Here are a few more bullet facts about special education you may find interesting:

- Special education students fall under the same state testing requirements (MCAS) as non-disabled students.
- Parents have broad decision-making powers in both the evaluation and IEP portions of the special education process.
- Title I is **not** Special Education. Title I is a federal grant program for disadvantaged students. We use our Title I funds to provide targeted tutoring in reading and math, primarily to non-disabled students.
- An ICAP is an individual curriculum accommodation plan. It is generally provided for non-disabled students who benefit from specific accommodations and classroom adaptations.
- The most common categories of special education found in the elementary school are specific learning disability-reading and specific learning disability-math reasoning.

- Students who have a specific learning disability (SLD) will typically have average or higher intelligence but a delay of two or more years in one or more specific areas (math, reading comprehension, etc.)

Students who are accurately identified as learning disabled may not ever completely overcome their disability. The good news, however, is that most learning disabled students grow to develop other areas of strength and competence that allow them to compensate and enjoy fruitful lives as learners and individuals.

I hope you learned something from this brief primer of special education. If questions remain, please feel free to call, write, or stop by.

TL



Yearbook Reminder:

The policy regarding including student photos in the yearbook has changed. Only students whose parent/guardian has signed a permission slip will have their photos in the yearbook. Thank you!!

Bus Conduct Reminder

Students and parents are reminded that students are expected to show the same positive behavior on the bus that we expect in the school. Bus drivers are encouraged to note the names of unruly or uncooperative riders and to report those riders to the principal. The first offense for an infraction of school bus rules will bring a warning to parent and student and the assignment of a seat on the bus close to the driver. The second infraction will bring a suspension of bus privileges for up to 5 days. The third infraction will result in a suspension of bus privilege for up to 10 days and the fourth infraction will result in suspension of bus privilege for the remainder of the school year.

When infractions are documented by drivers or otherwise verified, there are no exceptions granted to these disciplinary consequences. We ask all parents to talk about bus rules periodically with their children. They can be found on page 22 of the Morris Family Handbook. TL

MORNING DROPOFFS

Winter conditions make morning drop-offs in the Kindergarten Circle even more difficult than usual. Snow and ice removal are both problems that complicate parking and drop-offs. If possible, please put your children on the bus in the morning, or consider arriving at school closer to 8:20 when the back up on West Street is not quite as bad as it becomes by 8:30.

Please remember our safety guidelines: Make sure your car is in park when you stop to let children out. Do not leave your parked car running. Watch for other children getting out of their cars. Thanks for your help in making the circle in the morning a safe place for our children to be.



Math News:

Networking with other GoMath! schools.

Several teachers have recently been connecting with other GoMath! educators in an effort to make instruction with our new program as effective as possible. In December, Ms. Crane, Miss Mason, Mrs. Slosek, and Mrs. Miller joined Mrs. Cherry and Mr. Lee in a Skype with a school district in Connecticut. Members of the first grade team at Norwalk Public Schools, along with math coaches and the district math coordinator, shared their implementation of the Common Core-aligned program, Go Math!.

The collaboration was very beneficial to both schools. Given that the program is new, and one of the only programs completely aligned to the Common Core, both schools shared the growing pains associated with putting the innovative curriculum into practice. As a follow up, Mrs. Cherry, Ms. Crane, and Mrs. Miller will be heading out to Connecticut during the professional development day January 13th to watch their new friends in action. Networking with GoMath! schools around the region is intended to help Morris teachers become well-versed in all the components of this rich program –and effectively serving the diverse group of math learners at our school.

Mrs. Cherry, K-8 Math Specialist



PTO Corner

The Morris School PTO supplements an enriching program of events, educational assemblies, cultural programs and school trips to enhance our children's education, build their self-esteem and increase their awareness of the world around them. Did you know that in the past year, your PTO supported a program of events and activities that provides:

ADVENTURE! The PTO supplements school trips when state and local funding is cut. For example, the PTO covered the expense of bussing 4th graders to Mt. Greylock, 3rd and 4th graders to *The Black Violin* at The Colonial Theatre, and K's and 1st graders to *Strega Nona* at The Mahaiwe. **CULTURE!** The PTO funds a cultural education program with Shakespeare & Company as well as an in-school performance by Berkshire Theatre Festival. **LITERACY!** The PTO distributes free books to every child in school. **ART! and MUSIC!** The PTO provides instrument sponsorship for the Morris School Band and pays for Teachers' Wish List items such as a block press for the Art curriculum. **FUN!** We recognize every child's birthday with monthly on-stage celebrations and organize Thanksgiving festivities. **GAMES!** The PTO plans the annual all-school field day. **SPIRIT!** The PTO funds and plans the Staff Appreciation Week and the 5th grade class picnic. **HEALTH!** The PTO sponsors educational assemblies such as the *Healthy Choices* Assembly. **NATURE!** This year the PTO is sponsoring Mass Audubon Society's in-school weekly lectures. **SCIENCE!** The PTO organizes the annual Science Fair for grades K-5, Star Lab and *Mr. Science* Assembly. **COMMUNITY!** Your PTO organizes Kids' Park for all the community to enjoy as part of the Lenox Apple Squeeze. **FRIENDSHIP!** and **FAMILY!** The PTO plans ice cream socials, Family Movie and Luau nights.

The Morris March Mingler event is on March 23. Leave the kids at home and join us at the Country Club of Pittsfield for dinner, cocktails, and an incredible silent auction. Best of all, you'll have a chance to mingle with the Morris community while supporting enriching school programs. Watch for invitations coming home soon in children's backpacks.

Please consider coming to the next PTO meeting on January 17 at 7 p.m. in the Morris library. You'll have a chance to meet new people, and hear about what is going on at school. Feel free to bring your own, new ideas!

If you can't make the meetings, you can still make a positive difference by becoming more involved with specific projects that interest you.. Regardless of your skill set or how much time you have, everyone is welcome to participate.

We would greatly appreciate your help gathering donations for the silent auction. Donations can be big or small- a gift certificate, a product, or a sponsorship of goods and services. If you have something to donate to the silent auction (or if you know someone who does), please contact Jen Sacon. We are also beginning to stockpile photos of our kids at PTO-sponsored activities. If you are willing to share some photos with the PTO, please email them to Jen Sacon. Thank you

Preschool Orientation and Screening

Preschool Orientation and Screening:

The Lenox Student Services Department offers an annual screening for Lenox and Lenox Dale three and four-year-old children who will not be entering kindergarten in September 2012. The purpose of the screening is to identify children who may have substantial needs in speech/language, cognitive, emotional/social or physical development. Identified children will be further evaluated and may be eligible to receive special education services prior to entering school. Research studies indicate that early identification and remediation of potential learning problems improves school performance in later years.

Parents who would like to have their child considered for the preschool program as a typical (non-special needs) child, MUST have their child participate in this screening.

Orientation Meeting - March 20, 2012

All parents of three and four-year-olds are encouraged to attend an orientation meeting on Tuesday, March 22, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. at Morris Elementary School. The meeting will provide an opportunity for parents to meet the screening team and to examine screening materials.

Screening - March 27 and 28, 2012

The screening will be held on

March 27 and 28, 2012, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Morris School. Appointments for screening are required. Please call the Student Services Office beginning March 5, 2011 at 413-637-5571 to make an appointment.

All families listed on the 2011 Lenox Town Census with children in this age range will also be contacted directly by mail. If you have a three or four-year-old and you do not receive a direct mailing by March 9, 2012, or if you have any questions concerning the screening process, feel free to call the Student Services Office at 413-637-5571.

From the Health Office

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild blow to the head can be serious.

You cannot see a concussion. Signs and symptoms can show up right after the injury or may not be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. The following are symptoms reported: headache or pressure in head, nausea or vomiting, balance problems or dizziness, double or blurry vision, sensitivity to light and noise, feeling sluggish or foggy, concentration or memory problems, confusion.

If you think your child has a concussion seek medical attention and keep your child out of physical activity until cleared by a health care professional. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/injury. Mrs. Pignatelli, RN

Notes from the Music Room

Congratulations to our band and chorus students for a successful Winter Concert! **The Spring concert is scheduled for June 12, 2012.**



We will take a break from chorus until February 7th. This would be a perfect time for new members to join.

Grade 2/3 Chorus meets on Tuesdays at 8:00am. Grade 4/5 Chorus meets on Thursdays at 8:00 am. Contact Mrs. Pollard with questions. mpollard@lenoxps.org.

SPANISH VOCABULARY

leche—milk

agua—water

jugo—juice

gracias—thank you

por favor—please