



Welcome to 2011-2012 at Morris School!

September 2011

Check out our website at www.lenoxps.org

Calendar Highlights

- Beginning Band Night 9/13
- Parent Open House 9/22
- Picture Day 9/15 & 16
- PTO Meeting 9/20
- Morris School Council
- Rosh Hashanah 9/28-30
- Yom Kippur 10/7-8
- Columbus Day 10/10

VISITORS

Effective September 1, 2011, ALL visitors must use the communication-system to enter the school during the school day. It is located on the left side of the main entrance. Please check in at the main office before proceeding to classes or any other location of the school. It is essential for the office to know about the presence of all adult visitors to the school for safety reasons.



Please be sure to **return all forms** such as permission slips, intramural sports sign-ups, health information, emergency cards and parent register forms as soon as possible. Please include **e-mail** addresses. Our newsletter will be electronically sent and posted on our web site. Let the office know if paper copies are needed. Thanks!

From the Principal's Office:

We're off to a great start at Morris! It's been great to re-acquaint myself with our wonderful students, staff and parents as they have returned to school. Many things are unchanged as we start 2011-2012 – our enrollment is about the same (right around 340 students) and many of the same faculty and staff will be working with our kids again this year.

There are a few changes in staff, however, that I'd like to let you know about: **Mary Cherry** joins us as the K-8 Math Specialist serving the elementary and middle school. Mary is a math expert who will be working to align and improve math instruction in the district. **Ashley Scherben** joins us as a fourth grade teacher. She comes to us from the Pittsfield Schools where she has worked in a variety of assignments at the elementary level. **Kristen Zimmer**, a Mor-

ris parent and regular substitute, will be helping out Ms. Kennedy in the gym on Tuesdays and Thursdays as a PE Paraprofessional. I am happy to welcome these new staff members to the Morris team.

Another change parents may notice in the weeks and months to come - Lenox has adopted a new math program for grades K-6. **Go Math!** was selected to unite math instruction from early elementary right into middle school. Where there were at least three programs used in that grade span there is now one, and it is hoped that the common sequence of math topics will lead to substantially greater mathematics achievement for our students. Go Math! was selected in part because it is aligned to the new Common Core National Standards that are being

phased in across the country. Other interesting things about the program are that it features a lot of technology based components and it is new style of textbook -soft bound, completely recyclable, and revised annually.

Students and parents in the upper grades may notice that instruction in reading and language arts has changed some over the past year as well. Several teachers in the upper grades are piloting an approach called the CAFÉ. The acronym stands for **Com**prehension, **A**ccuracy, **F**luency, and **E**xpand of vocabulary – all skills that research shows makes for highly capable readers. CAFÉ is not a textbook but an approach that allows students to work on common concepts while choosing their own books at the “just right” level. Spelling and word study in the upper grades will feature the use of
(continued page 2)

Reading News!

I PICK Good Fit Books

*In our upper elementary, the students have been taught the **I PICK** method for choosing good fit books (Boushey and Moser, 2005). The acronym **I PICK** stands for the following: **I** Choose a book **P**urpose – What is my **purpose** for choosing that book? **I**nterest – Am I **interested** in the topic? **C**omprehension – Can I **comprehend** (understand) what I am reading? **K**now – Do I **know** the words?*

*When we help students choose books, we often ask the student to turn to any page in the book and read a paragraph or two. If the student cannot retell what they read or they do not know more than 2 of the words, the book is probably too hard for independent reading. This method may be helpful as you help your child to choose books for independent reading at home. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any more information on the **I PICK** method or for any book title suggestions. Wishing you an excellent start to the school year! Mrs. Fisher*



From the Principal's Office: (Continued)

a new text called "Words Their Way." Our Reading Specialist Mrs. Fisher will talk about this and other reading news in coming newsletters.

In other news, last year's mandates on bullying prevention have grown into a focus on positive school culture. Across the school district staff will be striving to model pro-social positive behaviors in every interaction with students and each other. The idea is that students are always watching adults and learning behaviors from us at every turn. The more we strive to interact with kindness, courtesy, and understanding, the more students will do the same. This, in turn, that will strengthen our school community and ultimately result in more learning for all.

And in MCAS news: I am happy to report some modest gains in school math performance in the past year. Some may recall that Morris' performance on 2010 MCAS in math led to a state designation of a school "needing improvement" last year. Math scores went up in 2011 and Morris made AYP ("Adequate Yearly Progress" or the amount of growth that a school must make each year under the federal No Child Left Behind law) in mathematics for 2011. It takes two years to improve a school's AYP status, but we are on the right track. This MCAS/AYP/NCLB business gets a bit complex so I'll be sending out a letter to families shortly explaining in detail our improvement status relative to the NCLB.



IMPORTANT PARENT NOTICES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The first professional development day for the school year will be on **Friday, October 28th**. The children will not have school this day.

At our opening staff meeting this year I reminded our faculty, learning assistants, and clerical personnel that MCAS and student performance data is just one way to measure a school's success. Equally important is that every day, every child comes to a place where he or she can feel safe and valued and welcomed. We want each student to want to be here and to feel that they belong. This is where learning starts and it is as much our task as the work of teaching reading and writing. As I talked about this with our staff I looked around and saw a lot of nods and smiles. Clearly, the Morris staff shares my commitment to make this a great place for kids and learning.

I'm always interested to hear parent ideas for making Morris the best it can be. Please e-mail, call, or stop by and best wishes for a great 2011-2012 school year!

Timothy Lee, Principal



No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires school districts that receive federal Title I funding to notify parents of the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers instructing their child. This link can be found on lenoxps.org/Morris under curriculum (NCLB report card). Paper copies can be provided upon request.

Dismissal and Pick-up Reminders:

Kindergarten and First grade students and their siblings who are being picked up by car must use the small pre-K circle drive. Staff members will bring your child to your car as they are dismissed from classes. If your child is not ready for dismissal, please circle the drive until they come out. We appreciate your patience as we get to know your car and your kids.

Tech Talk!

Welcome Back! We have an exciting 2011-2012 tech school year ahead. Morris School has purchased, via grant funding, 10 iPads for student use. We hope to begin piloting their use with students in mid to late October. For starters, we anticipate using the iPads for promoting phonemic awareness and phonics in lower grades, math fact practice in the upper grades, and as e-readers in our Morris library. In addition, we have been fortunate to receive a LEEF grant for the purchase of a SPARK Science Learning System, a mobile all-in-one probe ware, data collection and analysis device that will allow our science classes to measure and graph in real time temperature, humidity, light, sound, force and more.



We hope to expand the school-to-home connection by continuing to offer several of our web based school subscription sites for home use. Information will be sent home shortly regarding signing up for *World Book Online*, *NetTrekker* (Google like child friendly search engine), *IXL Math*, *Big Universe*, and more. In addition, we have a new math curriculum *Go Math* which will soon offer a variety of math tools for in school and home use such as the student math textbook online and interactive math applications.

Coaches Needed...In the past Morris School has participated in the *Berkshire Robotics Challenge*, a county wide applied technology competition for students in grades 4 through 8 hosted at Lenox Memorial High School in March. We have been on hiatus from the competition for a few years now and are interested in reestablishing a 5th grade team this year but we NEED your help – specifically 5th grade coaches. Do you enjoy science, engineering and math? Then this event is ideal for you. No experience necessary, Mrs. Jezak will provide coaches with a complete NXT robotics kit and all competition materials plus act as an assistant coach attending team meetings and the robotics challenge. Interested parents/guardians can reach Mrs. Jezak at Morris School.

For questions regarding tech services at Morris School, please contact Mrs. Jezak our Instructional Technology Specialist.

Happy & Safe Computing for All!

News from the ART ROOM: I would like to let parents know that students can come in to the art room before school to make up work missed due to absence or to catch up, in general. I am available to assist students on Mondays and Tuesdays at 8:00 to 8:35 AM. Students are also able to come in to work during their recess if a class is not in session. Art Club is held for grades 2-5 throughout the school year, each for 6-8 sessions. It will begin on **Wednesday, September 14th for grade 5**. If any morning is cancelled due to my absence or a snow day, it will automatically be added on to the ending date. Prior to each grade having Art Club, a notice will be sent out. Please return it signed and your child will be added to the list. It is held on Wednesday mornings at 7:45. Each week builds on the previous class, therefore latecomers are discouraged. I have posted a grading rubric outside my classroom so that parents and children can understand what is necessary to accomplish to receive each grade. Each child will be responsible for his/her completed portfolio, including self assessments and quizzes. I will review all the requirements with each class so that there are no surprises. Parents are welcome to come in to help in the art room. If you would like to join us, just call me at X3164 to arrange the day and time. Thank you! Mrs. Kain



Box Top\$ Equal Extra Cash!!

Please remember to **keep collecting Box Tops**. It is such an easy and valuable thing to do! So ask your neighbors and relatives to save them for you too. If you are new to Morris or you don't know, the collection box is the Cheerios box in the library window just inside the front door of the school. Please submit just 50 in one Ziploc (write 50 on the outside) and submit the rest in a separate Ziploc. What a great way to generate additional \$\$ to spend on extras for our children!

Change in Dismissal Plans? Send a Note!

Unless we have other instructions, the dismissal plan for our students is to send them home on the bus. These instructions have to be in writing if we are to insure that the plan is followed, especially on a long term basis. Sending in a note in advance presents us from interrupting classes to inform your child and the teacher of the new dismissal plans. Arrangements made during the last school year are no longer in effect.

Mandatory Notices: AHERA

This notification is required by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act ("AHERA"), 40 CFR Part 763 of Title II of the Toxic Substance Control Act. Asbestos Management Plans have been developed and are available for the following buildings currently in use by the Lenox Public Schools.

1. Morris Elementary
2. LMMHS
3. District Office, 6 Walker St.

These plans are available and accessible to the public for review at these locations.

Mr. Jeffrey Ano at LMMHS, 197 East St, Lenox, MA 01240 (413-637-5560) has been designated as the District's Designated Person under AHERA. A 3-Year Asbestos Re-inspection Report was recently completed and is available for review as part of the Asbestos Management Plan. No other asbestos-related activities are currently planned or in progress for the upcoming school year.



Bus Safety is Everyone's Concern!

While statistics show that riding the bus is the safest way to get to school, dangerous situations could occur if children don't follow school bus safety rules and procedures. Here are some general tips for helping students remain safe on the bus:

1. Make sure children stand back at least 5 feet from the edge of the roadway and do not approach the bus until it has come to a complete stop.
2. While waiting for the bus,

children should stay out of the street and watch for cars. 3. Children should be courteous when getting on and off, wait their turn, never push or shove on the stairs and remember your manners! 4. Children are expected to follow the driver's instructions and rules.

Drivers will not drop off children 3rd grade and younger unless they see a parent or caregiver—if this poses a problem, please call Jill Barnoski at 637-5522 x8.

MORE IMPORTANT NOTICES.....

LUNCH MONEY COLLECTION

Our lunch program operates as a debit system and each child's account should have a positive balance from which to deduct purchases. We check accounts on the 15th of every month. If the balance is below \$-25.00, you will be notified through backpack mail that your child will receive the alternate lunch within 4 school days. If you need to check your balance, call Mrs. Hopper.

FOOD ALLERGIES

We have an increasing number of children who are allergic to foods such as peanuts, peanut butter, nuts, and other peanut products, milk, soy, etc.. We have established the following rules for safety:

No sharing of snacks and/or lunch. Peanut free lunch zones are available.

CAUTION ON WEST STREET

It is important for all of you who are dropping students off as well as walkers using the crosswalk to exercise great caution. We have flashing lights that should slow traffic but these are often ignored by some drivers. Please observe the traffic signals and crosswalk laws and help keep all our students safe.

RESTRAINING ORDERS AND CUSTODY DOCUMENTATIONS

If you have special instructions or court orders prohibiting a spouse or other family member from seeing your children, it is essential that you make a copy for us. We need to let our recess staff and bus duty teachers know the specific requests so we may keep your children as safe as possible. Please remember to furnish us with up-to-date copies as changes are made.

Protection Against Discrimination

Discrimination Against the Handicapped

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and in accordance with Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, the Lenox Public Schools affirm that no qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored by the Lenox Public Schools.

Any complaints or inquiries concerning these policies should be directed to Ms. Cynthia Dinan, Director of Student Services at 637-5571.

TITLE I PARENT NOTIFICATION

We work hard during these first couple of weeks to identify students in Grades 1-5 who may qualify for Title I services in Reading or Math. We use a combination of teacher recommendations and selected test scores to determine which students are eligible for this supplementary assistance.

If you believe your child should be receiving Title I instruction in Reading or Math, or if you have questions about the assessments we use to determine eligibility, please call Mr. Lee at 637-5522 x8.

STARTING TIME

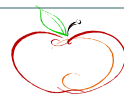
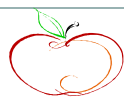
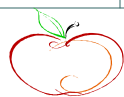
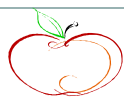
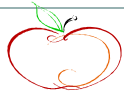
Morris School students go to classrooms at 8:35 and children will be marked tardy after 8:40. If you drive your child to school, they should arrive between 8:20 and 8:35. We ask that students be dropped no earlier than 8:20. Tardiness affects everyone's education. Please be prompt.

TITLE IX/CHAPTER 622

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Act of 1972, and Chapter 622 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Lenox Public Schools affirm that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, age, creed, national origin, or sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination in any education program or activity it operates including employment therein, and admission thereto.

Any complaints or inquiries concerning this policy should be directed as follows. For matters concerning PreK-5:

Timothy Lee, Principal
Morris School
129 West Street
Lenox, MA 01240



Volunteers Needed for Morris PTO Kids' Park at the Apple Squeeze: Sat. Sept. 24

The Morris PTO is once again organizing an extravaganza for kids and families at the Apple Squeeze. The fun will take place on **Saturday, September 24 from 10 am – 4 pm** at Lilac Park on Main Street in Lenox. Tickets for all activities will be sold at the event. All proceeds from the Kids' Park will support the Morris School PTO and the many activities and programs it makes possible at the school.

Please volunteer! We can't do it without you!

Please give a couple of hours of your time to support Morris and the PTO. Volunteers are needed to take tickets, supervise games, sell refreshments, set up, clean up, and more. Volunteer shifts are as follows:

8:00 – 10:15 a.m. (set-up)

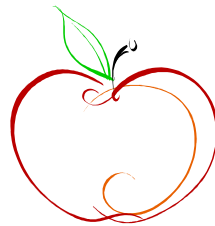
10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

12:00 – 2:15 p.m.

2:00 – 4:15 p.m.

4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (clean up).

Parents interested in volunteering should contact Lisa Nelson.



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.

