



# Morris School Newsletter

January/February 2017

## Calendar Highlights

- 2/20—2/24 February Vacation
- 3/7-PK Open House 6pm
- 3/7—Grades close
- 3/10—PD/Half Day
- 3/10 PTO Family Dance  
6:30—8pm
- 3/13 & 20—Kindergarten Orientation 2pm
- 3/17— Report Cards



## REMINDER NOTES

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

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## **From the Principal's Office.....**

### Accountability- The Good, The Bad, and the Great

Anyone who follows education trends or education news knows that the word “accountability” gets tossed around more than a sock in a clothes dryer. In fact, the current nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education repeated the word over and over again in her senate confirmation hearings without offering much clarification of what it means to her. This heavily -loaded word, often spoken as a command- “Accountability!” -is applied to state departments of education, school districts, individual schools, administrators, teachers, and students. The million dollar question on everyone’s lips is “What are we doing to hold schools/ administrators/teachers/

students accountable?”

Accountability at its worst reduces schools, administrators, teachers, and students into sterilized chunks of data that are used to make sweeping judgments about the organization or individual. This sterilized viewpoint often leaves out the context and complexities of navigating a human organization. At its best, accountability reminds educators and students to set high standards for learning (both academic and social/emotional) and to push themselves to shoot for the stars. When we set the bar high, schools, teachers, and students will blow us away with what they can accomplish.

So what does accountability look like at Morris

Elementary School? In regards to academics, teachers hold themselves and each other accountable for providing a challenging curriculum that emphasizes *understanding* over rote memorization of facts or information. Students are accountable for not just knowing that  $8 \times 7 = 56$  but also understanding *why*  $8 \times 7 = 56$ . We teach our students how to figure out what an unfamiliar word means when they stumble across it in their reading not just by getting out a dictionary but by using context clues and/or looking for familiar roots. Essentially, at Morris Elementary School we want students to use their beautiful brains in a way that will allow them to go on to middle school, high school, and beyond as flexible and (continued page 2)

### Kindergarten Screening & Orientation Dates!

**Monday, March 13th & 20th**, we will have kindergarten orientation to invite parents and future kindergarteners to learn more about our kindergarten program. Your child must be 5 by September 1, 2017. These sessions will take place from 2:00 pm until 2:45pm on consecutive Mondays. The orientation will provide an opportunity to meet the kindergarten staff, the principal, the school nurse and a representative of the PTO.

Children will meet their future classmates and explore the activities of kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to bring the students to both sessions. At this event, we will also give a preview of the registration screen days scheduled for **May 3rd & 4th**.

This event will allow you to sign up for the screening when teachers, health staff and specialists will be looking at early communication and language abilities, fine and gross motor abilities, and social and group skills. We look forward to seeing you on **March 13th & March 20th**.

## From the Principal's Office continued...

critical thinkers with skills they can apply to a wide range of situations and challenges.

What does accountability for behavior look like at Morris Elementary School? Teachers are held accountable for professional and supportive behavior with each other and with students. Teachers teach and model appropriate behavior for students and carefully consider the language they use to support students in making positive choices. When a student misbehaves, teachers or administrators speak directly with the student. We hear the student's perspective and then direct the student to reflect upon what their role was in the misbehavior and how they can make a better choice in the future. If someone or something was harmed (physically or emotionally) as a result of their behavior, we expect the student to own it, make amends, and/or experience a logical consequence. We do not allow students to dilute or deflect their responsibility by pointing the finger elsewhere when it is clear they had a part in the misbehavior. We want them to strive to make good choices for themselves because when it comes down to it they are all they have power over.

We have a good thing going here at Morris Elementary School. We keep a close watch on our data (which is impressive!) because it is an important piece of the accountability puzzle. However, we also keep a close watch on the big picture, which includes understanding the hearts and minds of our students. I offer up this definition for accountability at Morris: accountability means constantly reflecting on our practice as educators to be sure we are doing what is best for students and encouraging students to strive to do what is best for themselves. That, I think, is pretty great! CB

**The Science Fair**  
**Is coming**  
**Monday, April**  
**10th, 2017**  
**Save the Date!**

## Required Public Notice

### **ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE BY STUDENTS PROHIBITED**

A student shall not, regardless of quantity, use or consume, possess, buy or sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol, any tobacco product, any vaporizer or E-cigarette; marijuana in any form; steroids; or any controlled substance on school property, on school buses, or at any school-sponsored activity. Students found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action and referral to the Lenox Police Department.

Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs, (including controlled substances, marijuana in any form, or prescription medications not prescribed for the student) or alcoholic beverages prior to, or during, attendance at or participation in a school-sponsored activity, will be barred from that activity and may be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy shall be posted on the district's website and communicated annually through newsletters. Notice of this policy shall be provided annually to all students and parents in accordance with state law. Additionally, the district shall file a copy of this policy annually in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

SOURCE: MASC 2016

LEGAL REFS. : M.G.L.71:2A; 71:96; 272:40 A

CROSS REF: GBEC, Drug Free Workplace

REVISED AND ADOPTED: January 23, 2017

## Morris Yearbook Ordering

*Don't be left out in the cold when the yearbooks arrive in the spring...*

February is the shortest month of the year and the **ONLY** time to buy your **MORRIS YEARBOOK!**

Order yours online: [BUY NOW at Jostens.com](http://BUY NOW at Jostens.com) before it's too late. **DEADLINE to order is Feb 27<sup>th</sup>**

The Morris yearbook is made by kids for kids--- and every kid wants one! Blue Ribbon BONUS pages included.

Questions? Email Susan at [MorrisPTO@mspto.com](mailto:MorrisPTO@mspto.com)

## **MORRIS TIGERS' 2017 TALENT SHOW**

Singers, dancers, actors, musicians! Poets, performers, comedians, magicians!

Whatever your talent may be—Sign up so we can all see!

Rehearsal slots for individuals and group acts will be held after school on Tuesdays at LCC beginning on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Sign up soon and get on the schedule! Questions? [jeanne@jlsproductions.com](mailto:jeanne@jlsproductions.com).

**Don't forget to save the date for the show: Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at LMMHS Duffin Theater.**



## MORRIS INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

**2017-2018 Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30-2:30**

For Lenox residents ages 3 and 4 by September 1<sup>st</sup>

### OPEN HOUSE

**Tuesday, March 7th at 6 P.M.**

Visit our preschool, meet the teachers and learn about the screening process.

**Screening: March 28th & 29th**

**Pre-registration required at Open House  
or by calling 637-5571 beginning March 8th.**

The Morris Integrated Preschool program serves children who have been identified as having special needs, as well as typical peer role models.

**Morris Elementary School, 129 West Street, Lenox, MA**

No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender identity, native language, disability, or sexual orientation.

### **LEEF seeks grant applications!**

Do you have an idea for a unique learning or service activity at Morris? Need some funding to make it happen?

LEEF, the Lenox Educational Enrichment Foundation, may be able to make that idea a reality. Every year LEEF makes grants ranging from \$100 to \$1000 for activities and events that extend learning or provide service to the school or school community.

The grant application is easy. To apply or for more information go to: [www.berkshiretaconic.org/LEEF](http://www.berkshiretaconic.org/LEEF) or contact Tim Lee at 637-5550 or [tlee@lenoxps.org](mailto:tlee@lenoxps.org)

Grant applications for spring funding must be submitted by February 28, 2017.

### ***“Why are they teaching my kids math this way?”***

Do you ever find yourself asking this question? It seems that math education is really different since you and I went to school. There are actually good reasons as to why math instruction has changed so drastically. Often times you may have been taught what's called the *traditional algorithm* before you really understood why that *shortcut* worked. Studies show that when children are taught *why* something works in math before they are shown *how* to use the shortcut, they are more successful and are able to achieve higher levels of mathematical thinking.

The same can be said of learning math facts through strategies rather than rote memorization. When students learn how to figure out a math fact, the fact is not only memorized, but the process is internalized. For example, one of the most difficult multiplication facts for students to remember is  $8 \times 7 = 56$ . Students who can break apart the 7 into  $5 + 2$  are able to solve two easier multiplication facts  $8 \times 5 = 40$  and  $8 \times 2 = 16$ . Adding these two products together not only allows students to access a difficult math fact, but it also builds flexible thinking and provides the foundation for the distributive property which will be used in higher level mathematics.

Morris School is in its sixth year of utilizing *Go Math!*, a curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core. This curriculum influences not only *what* we teach but *how* we teach mathematics in the classroom. You may notice your student *exploring* a concept in mathematics *prior* to computing in a way which is more familiar to you. That building of understanding is extremely important to your student's foundation in mathematics. At times, this can be frustrating to parents who want to help their student find a quicker way to compute the correct answer. I encourage parents to resist the urge to give their children a *process* before the students have a chance to discover *why* a particular process works. Much of the work we do at a particular grade level will be beneficial to our students as they grow in their mathematical understanding through elementary school, middle and high school, and even college.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about how we teach math here at Morris School.

Mary Cherry, K-8 Math Specialist

### **Recess**

At Morris School we value outdoor recess for kids. We feel it provides students a much-needed break from academics and an opportunity to exercise and blow off steam. We are now deeply entrenched in the cold winter season. At Morris School we use the following guidelines to determine if recess will be outdoors.

- Every day prior to both morning and lunch recess, someone in the office checks the temperature at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for Lenox, MA. We look at the actual temperature and the “feels like” temperature which takes into consideration wind chill and cloudiness.
- If the “feels like” temperature is 15 degrees or above, children will go outside for recess if there is no saturating precipitation.
- If the “feels like” temperature is below 10 degrees, recess will be indoors.
- If the “feels like” temperature is between 10-14 degrees, conditions such as sun & wind speed will be taken into consideration and the Principal or her designee will make a judgement call.

The maintenance staff and the DPW work together to ensure that playground conditions are safe for outdoor play. In the event that our playground is excessively icy or unsafe, we may call for indoor recess until the safety conditions can be addressed.

**It is important that parents dress children appropriately for cold weather. Winter coats, mittens/gloves, hats, scarves and boots are all recommended. CB**

## **MCAS 2.0- What You Need to Know**

This year, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is implementing a new statewide test widely referred to as MCAS 2.0.

What does MCAS 2.0 have in store for us? Most notably, there will be a major shift in testing format from paper-based testing to computer-based testing. The state requires this year that grades 4 and 8 take MCAS in the computer-based format. Districts were given the option of taking grades 3, 5, 7, and 8 as computer-based or paper-based. In Lenox, all students in 4-8 will take MCAS in the computer-based format while grade 3 will continue with a paper-based test. The grades 5 and 8 Science, Technology and Engineering tests will be paper-based because that is the only option available.

Computer-based testing is new to Morris and Mrs. Jezak and the grade 4-5 teachers are finding new ways to integrate computers into their instruction to prepare students for this new testing experience. We always try to take as balanced an approach to state testing as we possibly can. We don't want the quality instruction we typically provide to be derailed by "prepping" for a test. However, we also don't want students to be overwhelmed when they sit to take MCAS on the computer for the first time.

If your child expresses anxiety about taking MCAS on a computer, we encourage you to reassure him/her that they will be well prepared and there will be a lot of teachers around to support them on testing days. See the MCAS Schedule in this newsletter to know when testing days are coming for your child. Be sure they get a good night sleep the night before and a good breakfast the morning of. Our students have some impressive technology skills which will serve them well as they transition to this new testing experience.

### **MCAS Testing Schedule 2017**

Date	Grade	Subject/Session
April 4 (T)	5	ELA- Session 1
April 5 (W)	5	ELA- Session 2
April 6 (Th)	5	ELA- Session 3
April 26 (W)	3 and 4	ELA- Session 1
April 27 (Th)	3 and 4	ELA-Session 2
April 28 (F)	3 and 4	ELA- Session 3

Date	Grade	Subject/Session
May 9 (T)	5	STE- Session 1
May 10 (W)	5	STE- Session 2

Date	Grade	Subject/Session
May 16 (T)	3 and 4	Math- Session 1
May 17 (W)	3 and 4	Math- Session 2
May 18 (Th)	5	Math-Session 1
May 19 (F)	5	Math-Session 2