



ESTABROOK UPDATE

Joseph Estabrook Elementary School, 117 Grove Street, Lexington, MA, (781) 861-2520

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March 9, 2007

A Principal Notes...At the parent coffee this morning, we discussed the MCAS. I want to share with you some of what we discussed. Whether the MCAS should exist or not is a different and important question, but it is here, probably to stay. With NCLB (No Child Left Behind), we are likely to see even more of “standards based” testing and perhaps at earlier grades.

I want to give you a context for understanding what these tests mean for your child in school and in your child’s life at home. Overall, at school, we try to teach as well as we can, provide as much support to help children develop the essential skills and attitudes all along the way, and work hand in hand with you as parents. Resiliency is a learned skill. Children who have learned that effort and trying your hardest is as important in academic tasks as it is in sports, video games, legos, or making friends, are ready for the challenges of school. Children learn to handle frustration and disappointment, to try try again, to solve some problems on their own, to be avid readers, to organize and complete their homework...all kinds of habits of mind learned at home as well as at school. We cannot do it without you, nor can they.

Over the years, we do prepare children for the kinds of skills and attitudes assessed on these federally mandated tests. As the test itself nears, we also focus on the strategies that help students

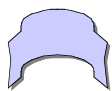
not only do well on these tests, but also be better, more critical readers, writers, and mathematicians. Preparing for the MCAS is not like preparing for the SAT. The MCAS tests whether students can demonstrate the actual skills and knowledge that the Massachusetts curriculum standards require us to teach. They do not test how smart a child is, and the tests are not scored on a bell curve. Theoretically, every child could demonstrate proficiency.

The MCAS has changed elementary teaching in a number of ways. We expect students to read and write at a much higher level than we did before. They must understand the difference between answers that can be specifically found in what they read and answers that require them to infer what the author meant. In math, we expect them to demonstrate sophisticated conceptual understanding of mathematical ideas and processes. They must explain their thinking in writing. There is very little actual computation on the test. Before the MCAS came along, we tended to provide a lot more help and answer more questions about directions and even sometimes more quickly “rescue” students when a task was frustrating. We did not think so much about how children develop independence as learners over time. By grade 3, the State now expects that students can sit still for over an hour at a time, keep their body in control at a desk, read and follow complicated

written direction, figure out what to do, and then go back and check their work when done. We can not answer any questions, give any hints, or remind them of anything they have learned.

In the next week, I will be visiting classes of children who will be taking the tests to share information and answer questions. I will remind them that these tests come from the state and that all children their age in public school take them. We do expect them to do their best because effort is more important than any other quality. The tests help teachers and parents know the kinds of things students can do well and what skills and attitudes we will still need to teach them. We let them know that these tests are longer than other tests, but that they can stretch, take brief breaks, go to the bathroom, and eat snacks. They can take as long as they need on the tests, up to the end of the day. Elementary age children worry that something bad will happen if they do poorly. I will reassure them that no one stays back if they do not do well in school and no one is in trouble.

Please be aware of your child's testing schedule and help your child relax, get a good night's sleep, eat a good breakfast, and, as much as possible, avoid other highly stressful performances and evening events during this time. Above all, have some relaxing and fun time at home. If your child seems to be unduly stressed about the MCAS, call Christine Zendah, guidance counselor, or the teacher.



Banner Bearers, Patriots Day Parade

The Lexington Town Celebrations Committee is looking for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders who would like to be Banner Bearers for the Patriot's Day afternoon parade on Monday, April

16, 2007. Permission slips are available in the Estabrook main office.

Teacher Conference Sign Up

The Teacher conference sign up sheets are posted outside the main office. Please stop by to sign up for a conference with your child's teacher.



CALENDAR-MARCH

- 13 Lexington School Committee Mtg. to discuss budget cuts
- 13 Math Olympiads, 4th grade, 8 am
- 14 Read Aloud Day
- 14 Drumlin Farm, 1st grade classes
- 14 5th Grade Basketball League, 5:45 pm
- 15 Kindergarten Parent Orientation, Harrington School 7-8pm
- 15 Math Olympiads-5th grade, 8 am
- 15 Band Rehearsal, 12:30 pm
- 16 Kindergarten Registration, Estabrook School, 9-11 am
- 16 Brownie Troop 3944, 3:15 pm
- 19 MCAS-Grade 5-ELA 1**
- 20 MCAS-Grade 4-ELA, Long Comp.**
- 20 Math Olympiads-4th grade
- 20 Lex. School Comm. Meeting, 6:30 pm
- 21 MCAS-Grade 5, ELA 2**
- 21 Site Council, 4pm
- 21 5th Grade Basketball League, 5:45 pm
- 22 MCAS-Grade 5, ELA 3**
- 22 Math Olympiads-5th grade, 8 am
- 22 Band Rehearsal, 12:30 pm
- 22 International Family Dance Night
- 23 MCAS, Grade 4 ELA1**
- 23 Report Cards Issued
- 26 MCAS, Grade 4, ELA 2**
- 26 Anti-Bias Meeting
- 26 Lex School Comm. Mtg, 6:30pm
- 27 MCAS, Grade 4, ELA 3**
- 27 Math Olympiads-4th Grade, 8 am
- 28 MCAS, Grade 3-Reading 1**
- 28 Chess Club, 7:45 am
- 28 North Shore Musical Theatre, 2nd grade
- 28 5th Grade Basketball League, 5:45 pm
- 28 Lex School Comm. Mtg, 6:30pm
- 29 MCAS, Grade 3, Reading 2**
- 29 Math Olympiads-5th Grade, 8 am
- 29 Band Rehearsal, 12:30 pm
- 30 MCAS, Grade 3, Reading 3**
- 30 Family Fun Night, Estabrook

FOUND:

A PalmOne Memory Expansion Card in the Gym during the Concert on March 8, 2007. It is in the Estabrook main office.

**Children's Librarian
Cary Memorial Library**

Family Storytime: stories, songs & fingerplays for 4-6-year-olds and their families

Mondays, 2:00 p.m.: March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 23, 30, & May 7

Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m.: March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 25, May 2, & 9

Carykids Book Club: grades 4 - 6

Do you love to read? Would you like to meet new friends and enjoy interesting book discussions? Join the CaryKids Book Club! Register and pick up a copy of the current book in the Main Library Children's Room.

Thursdays, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.: March 1, 22, April 5, 26, & May 10. Refreshments will be served.

Intermediate Knitting at the Main Library - all ages

A five-week course for intermediate knitters. Participants must know how to do the knit stitch.

Limited to 8 participants. Sign-ups begin in person on Monday, April 9, at 7 p.m. in the Cary Library Children's Room. Children must be able to attend at least three sessions.

Wednesdays, 3:30- 5:00 p.m.: April 25, May 2, 9, 16, & 23 .

Dance Dance Revolution! - Grades 5 & 6

Is it a game? Is it a dance? Come dance up a storm with this popular music video game.

Saturday, March 10, 10:30 a.m. – noon, in the Meeting Room. Space is limited, so only the first 20 completed permission slips received will be registered. Permission slips will be available on-line or in the Library .

Registration begins at the Children's Desk on Tuesday, March 6 at 7 p.m.

April Vacation Crafts - all ages

Children and their caregivers are invited to a craft program for all ages and abilities.

No registration is necessary.

Tuesday, April 17, 2:30 - 4:00 p.m., in the Main Library Meeting Room

Thursday, April 19, 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., at the East Branch Library

Dinner and a Movie - all ages

Bring your own picnic dinner, spread out a blanket, and enjoy a family movie in the Meeting Room. The movie will be 'Babe', the story of a runt piglet who embarks on a career in shepherding with some surprising results. The room will open at 6:00 p.m., 1/2 hour before the start of the movie.

Wednesday, April 18, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.