

A Principal Notes... Wonderful news: **Abigail Elizabeth Kuhn** was born at 2:36 AM on March 21. She weighed 8 lbs 12 ounces and was 23 inches long. Mrs. Kuhn and Abigail are doing well.

This week begins the annual ritual in Massachusetts of MCAS testing. Last week I visited every third, fourth, and fifth grade to discuss the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. I shared the observations of the third graders last year after they had completed their first sequence of English Language Arts and Math testing when I asked them what they noticed. The main observation children made was that this was the first time in school where they had to work for over an hour without being able to get a single question answered. Teachers cannot help in any way once the directions have been given. Students have to figure out how to solve their own problems and sometimes how to best answer a question they do not completely understand. Students with a tendency to rush through once must learn how to reread and check what they are reading and writing or computing.

Success on an MCAS exam reflects more than the instruction in the year it is given. It is the culmination of years of education in critical reading, writing, thinking, computing, and mathematical understanding. Nevertheless, there are some specific strategies students learn about the “genre” of taking a test. Most of them are also good learning strategies. For example, when reading for information, most readers do some preview and skimming. These strategies improve comprehension by alerting the reader what to focus on. In my conversations in classrooms last week, I was impressed with how many students could both describe this strategy and explain why it was in fact an effective reading skill. Another technique good readers use is to reread parts of the text in order to understand or find a specific piece of information. Our students often underline or highlight or use a sticky in their daily reading while rereading.

The ‘big’ idea is that strong readers are actively thinking and explicitly using strategies to understand text. A few students figure that out on their own and are excellent readers without much direct instruction. Most students benefit from more explicit instruction to move beyond reading from beginning to end without predicting, visualizing, questioning, and inferring. That forms the heart of reading instruction in the intermediate elementary grades.

I also reassured students that the main purpose of the MCAS in elementary school is to help teachers figure out what students have learned and what teachers must teach in a different way. We expect students to try their best, but we reassure them that they do not “stay back” based on the score on a test.

If your children are taking the MCAS this week or next, be sure to have as restful and nourishing a week as possible. I told all the children to be sure to have some protein for breakfast on a test day. They named some of the proteins: milk, cheese, yogurt, meat, fish, peanut butter, and tofu.

During MCAS testing weeks, you will see more signs reminding people to be quiet and we ask that no adults walk down the halls after 8:45 AM without stopping in the office (we know that is not supposed to happen anyway but it sometimes does). Do not walk into or knock on any doors if there are testing signs up.

Ellen Hauser Scholarship: If you would like to pay tribute to Ellen Hauser, you may make a donation to a High School scholarship fund in her memory. This scholarship will be awarded yearly to an Estabrook graduate. You may make your check payable to the Town of Lexington (Hauser Scholarship) and send it to school.

After School Sports: After school sports resumed last week; 4th grade students on Tuesday, and 5th grade students on Fridays. Students must be picked up @ 4:15 PM. Dismissal will be from the front door only.

Estabrook Adult Hangout Night – March 29.

All Estabrook adults welcome! Food, Drink, Music - what more could you ask for? Saturday, March 29, 7:00-10:00 p.m. at the Bedford Old Town Hall, 16 South Rd., Bedford. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Send cash or check (made out to Estabrook PTA) to the Estabrook office. Hope to see you there! - If you have any questions, please contact Jen Geller 781-862-6270, jentg@verizon.net or Rachel Cortez 781-674-1182, catirama@aol.com.

FAMILY FUN NIGHT!! Save the Date.

Tuesday, April 15th. Come play Bingo with family and friends and win prizes. Look for more details soon.

The Estabrook Book Fair - (April 14-17, 2008)

Gift certificates are available in any denomination. Yes, ANY denomination. Perfect for teachers, students, family, and friends! Great idea for Birthdays, Gift bags and Holidays!! Certificates help prevent lost cash and checks. 25% of all proceeds go directly to the purchasing of new books for our library. Gift Certificates may be purchased by completing the form which you can print off the Estabrook website: http://estabrook.lexingtonma.org/EstalInfo/2008_bookfair_form.pdf or e-mail your request to thebrowes@aol.com Checks payable to Estabrook PTA must be included with your order. Any questions? Contact Tricia Rowe at 781-929-8224 or thebrowes@aol.com

PTA Meeting on March 17.

At the PTA meeting on March 17, Joanne Tringale, Transportation Manager for the Lexington Public Schools, described her role in the school department and how parents should deal with bus-related issues. She explained that she is the liaison between the bus company and the schools and is in the position to work on resolving issues if she is made aware of them in a timely fashion. If you have a question or issue about the bus service, you should contact her directly either by phone at 781-861-2540 or by e-mail at transportation@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us. Answers to frequently asked questions about the bus service can be found on the school website at <http://lps.lexingtonma.org/bus/index.html>

Calendar

March

- 25 MCAS-Grade 4 Long Comp
North Shore Music Theatre, 2nd Grade,
8:45-11:30 AM
- 26 MCAS-Grade 3 Reading, Grade 4 ELA
ACT Nora Dooley-1st Gr. only
- 27 MCAS-Grade 3 Reading, Grade 4 ELA
- 28 MCAS-Grade 3 Reading, Grade 4 ELA
Y.E.S., 3:15-4:15 P.M.
- 31 MCAS-Grade 5 ELA

April

- 1 MCAS-Grade 5 ELA
Minuteman Park/Hartwell Tavern,
Gr. 3; 8:50 AM – 12 PM
PTA Meeting, 6-9 PM

MCAS Dates

March 25	Tuesday	Grade 4 Long Composition
March 26	Wednesday	Grade 3 Reading Grade 4 ELA
March 27	Thursday	Grade 3 Reading Grade 4 ELA
March 28	Friday	Grade 3 Reading Grade 4 ELA
March 31	Monday	Grade 5 ELA
April 1	Tuesday	Grade 5 ELA
April 2	Wednesday	Grade 5 ELA Grade 4 Long Comp Make-up
May 13	Tuesday	Grade 5 Math
May 14	Wednesday	Grade 5 Math
May 15	Thursday	Grade 3 Math Grade 5 Science
May 16	Friday	Grade 3 Math Grade 5 Science
May 20	Tuesday	Grade 4 Math
May 21	Wednesday	Grade 4 Math
May 23	Friday	Grade 5 History
May 27	Tuesday	Grade 5 History

