



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

McAlister Intermediate School

February 2015

Volume 2 Issue 4 Page 1

260 Mountain Road | Suffield, CT 06078 | 860-668-3830 | <http://www.suffield.org>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grade 4 Field Trip

CT Historical Society
Wednesday, February 4th
Friday, February 6th

Grade 4 Family Fun Night

Thursday, February 5th
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
(Feb. 9th Snow Date)

MIS Principal Conversations

Tuesday, February 10th
8:15 a.m.
MIS Conference Room

Sped PAC

Tuesday, February 10th
9:00 a.m.
McAlister Caf 

PTO Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 11th
7:00 p.m.
McAlister

No School

Monday, February 16th -
Tuesday, February 17th
February Vacation

BOE Meeting

Wednesday, February 18th
6:30 p.m.
SHS Media Center

Third Grade Traditions

Sunday, February 22nd
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Interskate 91 in
Wilbraham, MA



A Message From The Principal

Dear McAlister School Community,

We hope this newsletter finds you safe, warm, and enjoying the snow! While the winter season certainly brings us challenges with the weather, it also brings us joys--the joys of the Winter Concert, the holidays, grade level traditions, PE Family Events, and of course, our most recent McAlister event--a schoolwide celebration of reaching the milestone of 2,500 McAlister Way tickets.



The McAlister Way Schoolwide event marking our 2,500 ticket milestone was an opportunity for us to reinforce and celebrate the importance of the McAlister Way tenets of kind, respectful, responsible, and safe. As a school community we are always working to teach and then reinforce these tenets just as we do with reading and math! Remember, we cannot have a successful school and successful students if we do not have a positive and supportive school culture that promotes both social and academic success. Enjoy this month's newsletter, and we hope you stay both warm and safe during the upcoming weeks! Thank you as always for your support and partnership--we look forward to the months ahead.



The McAlister Way is an integral part of our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) endeavors. It frames our efforts as we work to build a school culture and system of behavioral supports needed for all children to achieve both social and academic success. PBIS has the core elements of defining, teaching, and reinforcing appropriate behaviors; continuous collection and analysis of data for decision-making purposes; universal screening for all students; systems for working with and

progress monitoring students in need; and increasing home / school communication relative to our efforts.



Karen E. Carpenter-Snow

Karen E. Carpenter-Snow



"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community."

- Anthony J. D'Angelo



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

McAlister Intermediate School

February 2015

Volume 2 Issue 4 Page 2

260 Mountain Road | Suffield, CT 06078 | 860-668-3830 | <http://www.suffield.org>

Virtual Backpack



<http://www.suffield.org/misvb>

[2014-2015 District Calendar](#)

[2015 - 2016 District Calendar](#)

[2014-2015 PTO Event Calendar \(updated 1/15/2015\)](#)

[2014 - 2015 Special Services Tri-fold Flyer](#)

[School Lunch and Breakfast Menus](#)

[McAlister Family Handbook](#)

[2014-2015 Suffield Elementary PTO Information](#)

[Grade 3 Traditions - February 22, 4:30 - 6:30](#)

[Grade 4 Family Fun Night NCCC - Parent and Sibling Support Groups](#)

[NCCC - Recreational Calendar](#)

[Suffield Little League Registration](#)

[School Lunch and Breakfast Payment Information](#)

[Suffield Park & Rec - Basketball Clinic - February 17th](#)

[Suffield Parks & Recreation Winter 2015 Catalog](#)

Winter Concert



Thank you to all our families and friends who came and enjoyed our Winter Concert with us. This is a very joyous and meaningful event that highlights all our students' learning in their general music and band lessons--set in the context of the holiday season! We also heartily thank our very own Mrs. Engler, Mr. Miglore, and all our students for their dedication and hard work on making this event a reality. Our next musical performance will highlight the fourth and fifth graders and will be in late May at Suffield Middle School--please plan on joining us for our upcoming musical showcase!



Fifth Grade Ping Pong Tournament



On a cold night in January, we had almost 40 families come and enjoy a single elimination ping pong tournament in our gym. Hosted by both Mrs. Raymond and Mr. Desrosiers, this event was highly enjoyable and memorable. A special congratulations to Kooper Ashmore and



his dad for coming in first place, Tyler Milne and his grandmother for coming in second place, Rigby Gee and his father for coming in third place, and to Ally Davis for being the big raffle winner! Thank you to everyone who participated and a special thanks to Mrs. Raymond and Mr. Desrosiers for working hard on facilitating this family fun event!



Nurse's Corner—by Mrs. Fall

Outdoor Recess--We will be having outdoor recess when the temperature is 20 degrees or higher. Temps in the 20's are brisk, so please remember to send your children to school with warm coats, mittens, hats and scarves. The cold weather also brings dry, chapped skin. Please consider sending your child with Chapstick or lip balm if they have red, sore lips.

Lice Advice!--Head lice is always an uncomfortable subject and we all start to itch when we hear the word! It is no laughing matter when your child is found to have lice but rest assured, it does not transmit disease or infections. Learning the facts and seeking medical advice will help give you the knowledge and tools to combat this annoying problem. I hope that all cases can be effectively communicated to my office (860-668-3830) in a confidential and respectful manner so as to prevent further transmission and to insure appropriate treatment. I encourage your questions, concerns and comments.



Principal Conversations

An opportunity for parents to :

- Meet with the principal, Karen Carpenter-Snow and assistant principal, Jack Ferraro
- Hear about the latest school and district initiatives
- Discuss important events
- Solidify the home-school connection that is so important to the success of our students.

Please join us for our next meetings:

Tues., February 10th
at 8:15 a.m.

Tues., May 19th
at 8:15 a.m.

McAlister
Main Office
Conference Room



Reading Corner-Mrs. Goguen Reading Specialist

Learning to read is one of the most valuable skills your child can ever learn. One practice that helps children on the road to reading success is for parents/guardians to set aside a special time each day to read with their child. This sharing time is extremely important because it demonstrates to your child that reading can be fun, exciting and informative. Best of all, when parents and children read together they have a special sharing time together. This time together not only helps your child to develop positive relationship towards books, but also emphasizes the important bond between an adult and child. The reading patterns that you establish with you children at home directly impact and influence your child's ability to perform in school. Here are a few suggestions that you can do at home with your child.

- Give your child plenty of opportunities to choose the books you read together. Let them pick books based on special interests or hobbies.
- Read aloud with a lot of expression. You can take on the role of one of the characters in the book and adjust your voice accordingly.
- Every once in a while, do some shared reading. You read one paragraph to your child and your child reads one paragraph to you.
- Dig deeper into the story. Ask your child about the story you've just read together. Try questions that require your child to draw conclusions. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?" A child's involvement in retelling a story or answering questions goes a long way toward developing his or her comprehension skills.
- Make reading a regular part of your family activities. Be sure to take books along on family outings or trips. Read to your child every chance you get.

Learning doesn't start and end at school. The more we can work together to develop good reading habits, the more successful your child will be. Thank you for all of your hard work and support as we all work together to improve student reading.

Third Grade - By Mrs. Halzack

Third graders have been immersed in a reading unit titled "Examining Points of View." Students have been focusing on describing characters and explaining how a character's traits and actions contribute to the sequence of events in a story. They have also been reading various fiction and nonfiction texts and examining the points of view of the author and comparing it to their own. In writing, students have been focusing on opinion writing. They have been working hard on writing opinion essays that include clear reasons and details to support their reasons. In math, third graders have been exploring multiplication and division. Students have engaged in many hands-on activities as they studied these concepts, including creating equal groups or sets with counters, building arrays, and representing multiplication number models on the number line. Our next unit of study will be on the relationship between multiplication and division. In science, third graders are embarking on an exciting unit on matter. This unit includes many hands-on activities and experiments as students explore such topics as classifying objects by their properties, heat conduction, and why some objects sink or float.

Third graders are also honing their keyboarding skills through the use of a web-based typing program. Students can access this program at home by going to typingtraining.com. Every student has their own log on and password. Students are asked to practice typing at home for ten minutes two nights a week.





Curriculum Highlights

Fourth Grade - By Mr. Kaulins



This winter it's all about pixies, goblins, and dragons in Fourth Grade as we begin an "enchancing" series of units on fantasy fiction in Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Students will begin with identifying the elements of fantasy fiction, the setting, and the rules of their character's world. We'll then move into several mini-lessons focusing on how to "read" a character's personality, traits, and motivations. Our fourth grade writers will then apply all of their new learning and write their very own fantasy stories!

In Math Workshop, students continue their study of multiplication and division.

Our mathematicians will continue to grow in their newfound knowledge by exploring the notion of using area models to solve three digit x two digit multiplication and division equations. You can check it out online at LearnZillion! <https://learnzillion.com/lessons/1879-use-an-area-model-for-multiplication-of-two-digit-numbers-by-two-digit-numbers>

Next up in Social Studies, students continue to explore CT and Suffield. We began our unit by "touring" our state and exploring where we are in relation to the rest of the country and the world. Check out this exciting video from Marbles, which walks us through the United States in the form of a rap! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2CNZIIVIg>

Students will continue their learning by using multiple resources to create their own clay maps of CT, identifying key features, and landmarks in our state.



This winter, there's lots of new learning to be excited about in fourth grade!

Fifth Grade - By Mrs. Larson

In ELA, students will be wrapping up a unit on informational text, and will be beginning to focus on understanding different character points of view while reading fiction, as well as writing opinion pieces. In social studies, students will identify with the different perspectives of the colonists living in North America under rule of the British king - from the loyal British Tories, to the Patriots, to those who chose to be neutral. Good websites that help students understand about this concept: www.historyglobe.com/jamestown/ and www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/road.html

In math, fifth graders will be wrapping up a unit on long division of whole numbers and decimals, and focusing on metric and customary conversions. Students will be continuing to



understand what happens when we move the decimal to the right or to the left. A good website to review these concepts: www.k5learning.com/free-math-worksheets/fifth-grade-5/measurement. Finally, in science, students will continue to learn about the properties of light and color. A good website to explore light and color: <http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/revision/science/lightshadows.html>. We will also spend time preparing for the upcoming Science CMT, so we will be discussing activities and experiments conducted in earlier grades, such as "Soggy Paper."





Math Corner - Mrs. Baranaskas Grades K-3 Math Specialist

Many adults have left school thinking that mathematics doesn't always make sense. Perhaps you were one of them. The way you learned math did not always enable you to *flexibly* or *efficiently* solve problems in ways that made sense to you. Typically your teacher showed you how to do it, step by step, and you practiced it over and over and over again, until you memorized the sequence of rote steps it took to be able to solve the equation. But you never really learned *why* the answer you got the answer you did; you never really *made sense* of the math that was *shown* to you.

The mathematical work that your child does in school and brings home is *so* completely different. Your child starts with a basic understanding of a certain math concept, say addition, and why addition works, then moves towards finding *flexible* (ability to use number relationships with ease in computation) and *efficient* (the most useful, appropriate and expedient) strategies for solving problems. And guess what? It may not always be the "traditional" method that you are so familiar with.

Consider adding $25+99$ the following two ways:

· Line up the numbers vertically up in your head. Add $5+9=14$; keep the 4, carry the 1,; $2+9=11$; $11+1=12$; so the answer is 124.

· Take 1 from 25 and add it to 99. The equation to solve is now $24+(1+99)$ or $24+100=124$. This strategy is called "compensation" (see a short video to learn more about this strategy at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh5L9aftjs>)

Both of these strategies resulted in the same solution, but which would you consider more efficient? Many of you would say the solution using compensation since it has the least number of steps to solve the problem. It is also *flexible* as students know that numbers can be broken (decomposed) into many different ways and rearranged to make friendly numbers (10s or 100s) to add with ease.

When working with your child, keep in mind that your child can and will make sense of mathematics if given the opportunity and support. Encourage your child to stick with a task even if it seems challenging. Be sure to talk through what the problem is asking and work together to discover *flexible* and *efficient* strategies together that might be used to solve the problem. Reinforce the idea that there are many different ways to solve mathematics problems.

For more information on how to support your child's mathematical reasoning, the following websites may be useful:

Doing Math Together: http://investigations.terc.edu/families/doing_math/index.cfm

Your Role with Homework: http://investigations.terc.edu/families/homework/your_role/

Parent Roadmaps: <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/244>

Parent Guides to Student Success: <http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>

And of course, if you have questions about mathematical reasoning and appropriate strategies to discuss with your child, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or me directly at 860-668-3830.



Staff Spotlight - Ms. Compton

What motivates you to be in education?

If you asked me this question when I was little, my answer would have been "writing on the chalk board!" Today, after the many years of learning and teaching, I am motivated by those faces that light up discovering things they never thought they could do; by the innocent conversations formulating friendships and trust; by the forever changing and evolving ways we, as educators, discover we can reach each and every child. I am proud to be an educator because I know I am influencing each and every life that enters these doorways, and I am helping them discover who it is they want to be "when they grow up."



Grade 4 Teacher

Years of Service: *I have been teaching for 12 years. Over the past 12 years, I have taught Special Education, second grade, and now fourth grade!*

What is your favorite part of the school day?

My favorite part of the day HAS to be Reader's Workshop! Reading is a huge part of the major gateway into learning. Reading provides opportunities to learn, to escape, to go on adventures, to meet new people, to experience things you never thought you could, or would! Reading provides us the opportunity to learn and practice so many other skills that are beneficial throughout our entire lives. Reading is not just letters forming words; it's forming experiences.

What does the McAlister Way mean to you?

The McAlister Way means community. It means a sense of belonging and a sense of mutual understanding. The McAlister Way is an important aspect of our school community because it sets us up and gets us ready to confidently go into the world and know that we are good people with strong values and traditions. It is our tradition to be Kind, Respectful, Responsible and Safe. That is something to be proud of!

Important Reminders

McAlister School Spirit T-Shirts--We sold just over 400 McAlister School Spirit t-shirts earlier this year, and have had requests to run the sale again. We are excited to be able to re-open the t-shirt sale. T-Shirt order forms are available in the McAlister Main Office. Be sure to purchase your McAlister School Spirit t-shirt for all of our school spirit events.

PBIS Survey--We are working to get our families' feedback relative to our PBIS communication efforts. Please be sure to complete and return your PBIS survey (printed on yellow paper) to the main office by the end of the month.

Student Absences--When your child is absent from school, please be sure to call our main office at 860-668-3830 and leave a message that includes your child's name, when your child will be out, and their teacher's name. This helps us to maintain accurate records for each of our students.

Students Leaving Early--As our school year progresses, we need to ask our families to help us increase the amount of instructional time that all our students receive. Please work with us to refrain from picking up your child before the end of the school day unless it presents a hardship with doctor's appointments and the like. We can only truly make an impact when our students are with us for the entire day!



“The McAlister Way” by Jack Ferraro

Teach and celebrate. At the risk of oversimplifying, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), is a framework for improving school climate through the teaching and celebration of expected behaviors in order to provide students with the necessary support to achieve both academic and social success. At McAlister Intermediate School, The McAlister Way of being kind, respectful, responsible, and safe provides the common language for teaching what is expected of all school community members, at all times, and in all settings of our school.

Perhaps the most fundamental expectation is kindness. Upon return from our Winter Vacation our school assembled for our first schoolwide morning meeting with a focus on kindness. At this whole school morning meeting we had the opportunity to listen to Jacqueline Woodson’s powerful children’s picture book, *Each Kindness and learn about the power of acts of kindness, both done and those left undone*. Our story was read aloud by a representative group of 14 school community members, each taking a turn to read a page from the story as the award-winning illustrations projected on the screen for all to see. The gymnasium was uncommonly silent as we listened to student, teacher, and parent representatives join our custodian, our school resource officer, a cafeteria worker, a paraprofessional, and our principal in taking turns reading to us.

When the story was over, we watched a short, two-minute video clip on random acts of kindness to give us ideas for simple (and some not-so-simple) ways we can show kindness to others. Students and teachers then returned to their classrooms, where

students participated in a guided discussion of the story and follow-up lesson activity

facilitated by teachers, taking turns dropping a pebble into a bucket of water and watching the water ripple as they shared a simple act of kindness they had recently shown to another person.

Just two weeks after our schoolwide morning meeting on kindness, our school community got together again, this time at the end of a Friday afternoon, to recognize and celebrate our students’ 2,500 McAlister Way Tickets earned, representing random acts of kind, respectful, responsible and safe behaviors since the middle of November! This celebration was a surprise to students, who

entered the gym to high-fives as they ran through a tunnel of teachers’ outstretched arms, all as the song, *Celebrate*, by Kool and the Gang, blasted through the sound system. The gym was buzzing as students took their seats, wondering what all the fuss was about. When students heard we were one quarter of the way to our year-end goal of 10,000 tickets, the celebration kicked into gear as our physical education teachers,

Mr. Desrosiers and Mrs. Raymond, led us all in a schoolwide Cha-Cha Slide. All in all, a wonderful way to highlight our learning and to celebrate our accomplishment! We look forward to our next whole school morning meeting which will focus on respect.

