



The Merriam Community News

May 2009 - Volume 17 - Issue 9

A Message from Ed:

Sometimes I'm amazed at how far in advance we have to think about things in life. We need to book airline tickets for our vacation destinations months ahead of time. Summer camps are usually signed up for in the winter. We look at colleges a year or two before we go, and sometimes think about where we're going years before that. I guess there's a trade-off: With less planning there are often more opportunities for spontaneity, but when we plan ahead, we can take care of situations that may require a good deal of forethought.



It's with that spirit that I write to you today about class groupings. Though it's about four months before we begin school next year, we need to begin the process of creating groups. For some of you this will be easy. If your child is in the second year of a loop, he or she will be with the same students and teacher for another year.

For students entering first, third, or fifth grade, we will soon undertake a process to create balanced groups. Our professional staff will work to create groupings where children will be comfortable, and will be able to learn and grow together. All children will be grouped with a comfortable peer from their current class or a previous class. Attention will be paid to strengths and needs of students, and special education considerations will be factored in. Classes will be created without a teacher's name associated; I will add the teacher's name to each group once the process is complete.

There's no magic formula for creating balanced classes. A great deal of time is spent on discussions that enable us to do the best job we possibly can. Remember – kids grow and change – even over a summer – and these changes can affect the dynamics of a classroom. The good news is that our teachers work hard every year to bring students together and to build a sense of community, and that's something you can count on in every classroom at Merriam.

We will not accept requests for specific teachers or for specific peers to be with your child next year (Unfortunately we cannot give consideration to letters where specific names are mentioned). I am happy to explain in more detail why we do not take those requests (feel free to write or call), but from all that I've experienced and all that I know, it is not the best way to construct classes. Our emphasis is on creating groups of children that will fit all of our learning environments, rather than matching teachers with students.

We would like to give you the opportunity to let us know what factors you'd like us to consider most when grouping your child. Your input might provide us with your child's strengths, weaknesses, learning styles, or social and emotional factors that are important for our consideration. Please do not describe a teaching style you would prefer or any characteristics of a potential teacher.

If you want to send in a letter with input, please do so by Monday, May 11. Most of the work on grouping will be done before the end of the school year, but since there are some changes during the summer, classes will be finalized in August. We will let you know the date that you can access this information later in the year.

It looks like spring is finally here! Here's hoping that we can all be in the moment and enjoy it (without planning too far ahead)!!

Thank You for a Great Auction!



Many thanks to all who made Merriam's 10th Annual Auction a success! Together we raised nearly \$47,000 to help fund our classroom teaching assistants.

So many of you were involved in this tremendous effort; many thanks to all of the following people for all of your efforts, as well as anyone we may have missed: Fran Strohm, Ed

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Auction Thanks – from page 1

Kaufman, Kristina Rychlik, Donna German, Lynn Armstrong, Tina Hamilton, Shannon Bischoff, Jeanne Herring, Orissa Lawrence, Kathleen Iglesias, Susan Brager Murphy, Joanne Urso, Jenny Patterson, Warren Patterson, Christo Tsiaras, Susie Alex, Laura Wordsworth, Pam Saarinen, Maya Patel, Ali Stanton, Deniel Fleming, Kathy Simmons, Beth McKeon, Andrea Fidler, Amy Fedyk, Carmen Logue, Ann O’Grady, Lana Peone, Rebecca Niles Peretz, Griet Dehandschutter, Caroline Weaver, Dianna McNeish, Andrea Mantineo, Lisa Caputo, Ruth Shaughnessey, Lauren Pollak, Kathy Simmons, Kathy Jackson, Ali Stanton, Nicole Cring, Colleen White, Katy Frey, Jen Brown, Janice Fairchild, Maria Tsousounis, Richard Ward, Denise Al-Atraqchi, Tina Humphreys, Lisa Pearson, Deanna Morse, Sue Metcalf, Sarah Murphy, Lisa Jensen-Fellows, Trudy Khosla, Neena Arora, Jessica Bartlett, Chiuling Campo, Whitney Heavey, Lisa Jones, Bob Mackin, Kim McCormick, George Olson, Marisa Olson, Lisa Sajedi, Karla Smith, Eve Tandon, Kim VanSavage, Kelley Vialle, Susan Ward, Linda Strahle, Allison Nicolle and Wendy Wildes.

A final note: if you lost your cracker prize on the night of the auction (Moodz and Domino’s gift certificates), or if you still need to claim any items purchased, please contact Kristina Rychlik at krychlik@mac.com.

Green Energy Fair Planned for May 17

Want to cut your energy bills? Reduce your carbon footprint? Find out how at the Acton Green Energy Fair, slated for Sunday, May 17, 1:30-5:00 p.m. at R.J. Grey Junior High School.



Meet a Greasecar that runs on french fry oil, an electric bicycle, and a plug-in car! Check out hands-on exhibits about solar power, wind power, solar cookers, LED light-bulbs, Kill-a-Watts and more. Learn how to make biodiesel.

Talk with contractors about home energy audits and how to install solar panels, geothermal systems, and wind power. Take a tour of the solar panel array at the Leary Field concession stand.

Acton PIP will take part in a Green Energy Fair, on Sunday, May 17, at 1:30-5:00 p.m. at R.J. Grey Junior High School. The day’s events include:

- **Keynote Presentation by Dr. Sajed Kamal at 2:30 p.m.:** Internationally renowned expert on current innovations and future directions in renewable energy (photovoltaics, wind turbines, solar cookers, solar thermal systems, biogas plants, hydroelectric generators).
- **Low Carbon Diet Workshop 1:45 p.m. (Grade 5 through adult):** Inspired by the Low Carbon Diet workbook--learn how to shrink your energy bills!
- **NSTAR Energy Magic Show 4:00 p.m.** (limited seating, Grades K-4 with adult)

For more information, visit www.greenacton.org.

Merriam’s Spring “Yard and Bake Sale” Is Coming!

Save the date: Saturday, May 16, 7 to 11 a.m.

Clean out and organize your stuff. Send it to us for a fundraiser for Merriam. On Friday, May 15, 3-6 p.m., drop off your items at the Merriam Cafetorium. These can include: furniture, household items, books, movies, music, puzzles, games, toys, crafts, and sports equipment in good shape.



We need volunteers!

- **Friday, May 15:** Help unload donations and set up (3-6 p.m.), and/or drop off (breakfast-related) baked goods.
- **Saturday, May 16:** Help with sales (6:45-11 a.m.) and clean-up (11 a.m. – 1 pm).

Contact Margaret Miley at marg.miley@verizon.net or 978-263-7533. Don’t miss the best yard sale of the spring! Help us raise money to give the sixth graders a big send-off at the end of the school year.

Coming This Week: PTO Communications Survey

The PTO Communications Committee is looking to "Make a Difference" by streamlining communications. Help us determine how some school and PTO information could be distributed.

The survey will be available on the Merriam PTO website, sent as a link in the weekly PTO e-mail, and sent home in paper format. Please take a moment to answer the 10 short questions.

AB PIP Offers Summerskills Workbooks

Parent Involvement Project (PIP) is coordinating the sales of Summerskills Sharpeners, a series of math workbooks spanning PreK-8, Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, and High School Math. The workbooks are aligned with the National Math Standards and are designed to reinforce the



mathematical concepts learned in the just-completed school year.

Parents are generally advised to select the book grade-level that corresponds with the grade their student has just finished. Summerskills Language Arts (PreK-7), Spanish (I, II), and French (I) workbooks are also available through PIP. Cost is \$17 per book - a savings of \$2 over the publisher's list price. For each book ordered, at least \$2 goes to support PIP family math and science activities.

Samples of the Summerskills workbooks are on display at the Acton Memorial Library in the teen area of the Children's Department, or can be previewed at www.summerskills.com. Order forms are available online at <http://actonpip.org/pdf/2009summerskillsorderform.pdf>, and are also available with the samples at Acton Memorial Library. Place your order by Friday, May 23, for "backpack" delivery in mid-June. Contact Susan Krikorian at 978-635-0174 or actonpip@yahoo.com for more information.

Show your support for Earth Day, have your Summerskills books delivered in an "eco-friendly" PIP reusable grocery bag with an additional \$5 donation to PIP. Visit the PIP calendar, <http://actonpip.org/calendar> and learn about the **Green Acton Energy Fair** Sunday May 17th, and the **AB PIP Book Club** meeting the evening of May 28th at the Discovery Museum.

PIP is a network of parents, educators, community, and business partners supporting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education K-12. For more information about PIP visit www.actonpip.org.

– John Petersen & Karen Herther, AB PIP

Update: Merriam's Cashless Fundraising Opportunities

Donelan Receipts - Register Tapes for Education 2008-2009: Thank you to those who sent in Donelan Receipts this year for the Register Tapes for Education program. We submitted

111,016 cash value points, surpassing our goal of 100,000. Stay tuned to hear what education equipment/supplies were selected by Merriam.

Target's "Take Charge of Education" Do you shop regularly at Target and *Target.com*? Do you already have a **REDcard**? You can easily enroll your REDcard in Target's Take Charge of Education program and choose Merriam School in Acton from their eligible school list. Once enrolled, 1% of your REDcard purchases at Target and *Target.com* are donated to Merriam. More than seven million Target cardholders participate nationwide. For some schools, it adds up to as much as \$10,000 a year.

Box Tops for Education: Spread the word to friends and family and enlist their help clipping and saving Box Top coupons for Merriam School. Last year, the school received more than \$900 from the Box Tops sent in by Merriam families.

Look for Box Tops for Education labels on some of your favorite products. Send them to school with your children or drop them off in the office. For more information, check out www.boxtops4education.com or contact Tricia Forrester at pvforrester@gmail.com.

Pied Piper Is Coming to Town!

Open Door Theater is pleased to present the world premiere of a new musical, *The Pied Piper*! This new show, directed and written by local performing arts professional Rene Pfister, with Jan Mankowsky, is based on the story of The Pied Piper of Hamelin. Many familiar nursery rhyme characters are included such as Old MacDonald and a band of Rats that wreak humorous havoc on the village of Hamelin.

The Pied Piper is for all ages young and old! Many of our very own Merriam students are in the cast. Look for Yasmine Ben-Shir, Emma Bowe-Shulman, Andrew Haan, Myla Haan, Karly McNeish, Anusha Purakayastha, Eleanor Tolley, Katie Wallace, Julien White, and Hannah Whitney.

Performances will be held on May 1, 2, 8 and 9 at 7:30 P.M. and on May 9 and 10 at 3:00 P.M. at the RJ Grey Auditorium. Tickets are just \$8.00 per person and are available through any cast member or through www.mktix.com. For more information, visit www.opendoortheater.org. This year's performances will surely sell out so be sure to get your tickets now for The Pied Piper!

Healthy Snacks List

Check out the May lunch calendar and flyers that included info about healthy and tasty snacks, no-prep snacks, beverages, healthy-eating guidelines, and food allergies.

Update on Scrip Orders

The Merriam PTO is offering another chance to place Scrip orders this month. This program has already raised more than \$1500 to support teaching assistants in the classrooms at no additional cost to the Merriam community. Thank you to all the families who have participated in the program through gift card purchases. We continue to receive very positive comments from those who have ordered.

All orders must be in the Merriam office by close of business on Monday, May 4th so we can distribute cards on Friday, May 8th, just in time for Mother's day! (There will also be one more opportunity to place Scrip orders before the end of the school year.)

Save time by ordering gift cards for:

- Moms
- Grads
- Birthdays
- Or, for everyday purchases at CVS, Roche Bros., and other retailers

Order forms have been distributed with Friday mail and are available to download from the website. Check out the extensive list of participating merchants.

If you have questions about the scrip program please contact Cathy Castaneda at cathy_castaneda@hotmail.com.

May PTO Meeting: Update on Technology@Merriam

From classroom computers to cameras - join us to discuss how Merriam teachers and students are using technological tools to enhance educational



experiences. This is the final PTO Community Conversation of the 08/09 school year. Come join us: Tuesday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parker-Damon Library. Hope to see you there!

Parker-Damon Spring Clean-Up is Sunday, May 3 - Come Join Us!

The Annual Spring Clean-Up of the Merriam and McCarthy-Towne grounds takes place this Sunday, May 3rd from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

We need to get these grounds cleaned up this spring! With your help we can make our school grounds look beautiful! Bring your rakes, weeding tools, and wheel barrows. The whole family is welcome - and we need all the help we can get! The landscaping of the grounds is done only by volunteers and we need you!

For more information, please contact: Amanda Lye, at amandalye1@yahoo.com or (978) 635-9879, or Karen Dean, at dkdean83@gmail.com or (978) 274-2084.



Wish List (if you cannot donate a little time – perhaps donate one of these to our hard-working efforts): A small child's wagon for moving hoses back & forth to gardens, a 40lb. bag of compost (organic if possible), or small tools you no longer need, but that are in good condition.

Help the PTO: Get Involved And Have Lots Of Fun!

The Merriam PTO is looking for volunteers for the 2009 - 2010 school year. We have wonderful opportunities to get involved, meet new people, make new friends and assist in our goal of helping to raise funds to pay for our AMAZING classroom assistants.

If you're interested in finding out more info on how you can get involved, please contact Lynn Armstrong at lynn.armstrong2@verizon.net or Donna German at donna@obxnj.com.



May Calendar

May 1 – International Night with McCarthy-Towne, 6:15–8:30 p.m.

May 3 – Parker Damon Spring Cleanup, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

May 8 - Sol Y Canto performs during All-School Meeting. Sponsored by the AB Cultural Council.

May 12-13 – Math MCAS for grades 3, 4, 5 and 6.

May 13 – May Birthday Lunch.

May 16 – Merriam Yard Sale, 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

May 19 – PTO MEETING, 7:30 p.m., Parker Damon Library. PLEASE COME JOIN US!

May 19-20 – Science/Technology and Engineering MCAS for fifth grade.

May 25 – No School - Memorial Day.

May 27 – Memorial Day Band Concert, 10:00 a.m.

The Merriam Community News

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The next issue will be published May 29, 2009. Email articles by May 22 to Joe at jb_campo@yahoo.com.