



The Merriam Community News

December 2010 - Volume 19 - Issue 4

Ed Notes

“Keep kids safe. Help children to resolve problems on their own or with support. Handle situations that occur on the bus or the playground. Provide students with the vocabulary to use in challenging social situations. Make sure that children are included and treated with respect. Work as a team to resolve complicated student conflicts. Create a community of caring where kids look after one another. Teach children about the benefits and the risks of using technology, including internet use, email, and cell phones. Help children to stand up for themselves and others. Model kind and respectful behavior for our students.”



These are just some of the hopes expressed in the bully prevention work that has been done at Merriam School this fall. There have been several important events: training for 76 of the Merriam staff members by Open Circle representatives on our Professional Day, a presentation to the School Committee on the evening of their visit to Merriam on November 18, and the first of three “Internet Safety and Cyberbullying” workshops for parents of students in grades 4-6.

On November 2 classroom teachers, specialists, special educators, classroom assistants, and special education assistants took part in a three-and-a-half hour workshop, led by three Open Circle representatives. We discussed definitions of bullying and other terms such as “bystander” and “target” that are used in the literature. We spent time reviewing important elements of the new Massachusetts law about bullying. We examined case studies, using a small mixed-team approach to think about how we might tackle challenging situations. We discussed both proactive and reactive approaches that we are utilizing as a community. And we talked about our goals for the future - one of which was to consider all of the

ways to invite Merriam parents to participate in this important process.

On November 18 I gave a PowerPoint presentation at the APS School Committee meeting. The theme was “Bully Prevention: Proactive and Reactive Strategies”. I discussed the ways that our school structures (such as all-school meeting, Community Day, Theme Day, buddies, looping, family groups, etc.) that build community are crucial proactive strategies for helping children to care for one another. I provided information about our Open Circle program, including how all of our teachers are trained in using this social skills building and conflict resolution program with their students. I reported on trainings that our staff and children would be taking part in over the course of the year, including an in-school internet safety course for our fifth and sixth grade students. And I shared reactive strategies; how we take a comprehensive, careful and sensitive approach when dealing with situations where students have been “hurt” in some way by others. We use our group structures that are already in place (Child Study, Grade Level Meetings, and Staff Meetings) as vehicles for important conversations that help us to resolve these situations.

On November 17, thirty-two fifth grade parents came to a meeting before school to discuss internet, email, and cell phone use issues. Maryann, Martha, Tracy, and I all shared our observations, along with strategies that we employ to educate the kids and to deal with issues that occur in school. But the most powerful aspect of the morning was the sharing between and among parents. It was clear to all of us that cyber-issues can easily become both school and home issues, and that working as a community to

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From the Nurse: Dressing for Winter

The cold weather has arrived! Our students will continue to go outside for recess unless it is extremely cold or raining. Recess is an important part of their day, and gives them a chance to exercise, socialize, and get some fresh air.



Please make sure that your children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Coats, hats, mittens, and boots are a must when the weather is cold, and don't forget snow pants when there's snow on the ground. Dressing appropriately for winter temperatures will keep the children not only warm and comfortable, but healthy as well.

Camp Fair is Coming on January 27th

Save the Date and Perhaps Donate

Thurs 1/27 is the Camp Fair Date. No time to help out? Perhaps Donate! Camp Fair raises huge funds to help fund Merriam's Classroom Assistants. It's the only fundraiser that earns money from businesses and not Merriam families. If you don't have time to bake or help on Jan 27, please consider donating. Small donations from Merriam families were a significant contributor last year!

Here are some small donations needed. Any monetary donation also helps very much!

- 1 case (24 cans) coke
- 1 case (24 cans) caffeine free diet coke
- 12 pack (cans) diet coke
- 1 case (24 cans) sprite
- 1 case (24 – 16 oz plastic bottles) Poland Spring Water – 4 cases needed
- 1 table rental - \$11 per table – 7 tables needed *
- 1 large pizza from Dominos – \$12 per pizza - 12 pizzas needed *
- Hot Dog Steamer rental - \$40 per steamer – 2 Steamers needed *

Merriam Auction 2011

Save the Date:

**Saturday, March 26
at Marriott SpringHill Suites
in Devens.**

* For these items, please donate funds for them and our committee will arrange to get them.

Please send donations to school Attn: Judy Nolan, Camp Fair Committee or mail them to Judy Nolan at 12 Lincoln Drive Acton , MA 01720 To help, to share your ideas, or ask questions: merriamcampfair@aol.com. Thank you!

GameNight is a Success!

Merriam held its second annual Gamewright GameNight on Friday, November 12 and it was terrific. Families came together to play a variety of fun and educational games. In addition to table-top games that families could play together, many took advantage of the space on the stage to play Boochie (an indoor version of Bocce).

In addition to being such a great family event, parents could purchase games for themselves, as gifts, and for teacher wish lists. As a result, the event made almost \$350 to support Merriam's classroom assistants. A special thank you goes out to Donna Griesenbeck, Tina Humphreys, and Meredith Ward who helped make this event a success. Also, thanks to Diane Johnson for coordinating the event.

Doughnuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom Slated for January



Come join us Tuesday, January 11 at 8:30 AM, followed by a PTO meeting. Ed Kaufman will share his findings from last spring's survey on End-of-the-Year Conferences and the teachers will show us

how students use technology at Merriam.



Merriam Auction 2011 - "Making a Difference"

Before you know it, spring will be here and so will the Merriam Auction on March 26. The success of the

Merriam auction is due in large part to the generosity of the Merriam community. If you can donate a service, a talent, a personal creation, or an item, you will make a difference. Additionally, community donations are often received through the generosity of employers and their non-profit donations programs.

Whether you're new to Merriam or have been in the community for years, we all recognize that our dedicated classroom assistants set Merriam apart. Your donation, large or small, will go directly to funding our talented classroom assistants. Now *that's* "making a difference."

If you have any questions about community donations, please contact Renee Yourk, Community Donations liaison, at ryourk@verizon.net or 978-264-4252.

Cashless Fundraisers

Register Tapes for Education 2010-2011

Do you shop at DONELAN'S? You can help Merriam earn credit for FREE equipment by placing your Donelan's register receipts in our school's collection box. The receipts must be from September 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011.

Last year we collected over 110,000 in cash value points. Our goal this year is to again collect over 110,000 in cash value points. Please help us reach our goal by shopping at Donelan's. Save your receipts dated September 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 and send them to school with your child. A collection box is located in the Merriam office.

Box Tops for Education: Great news! Donelan's in Acton has let us place a box there for the collection of Box Tops, so now we have two collection points, please use what is the most convenient means for you.

Please keep clipping your "Box top\$ for Education." For each box top we receive we earn 10 cents for the Merriam PTO!!! Clip the tops and send them to school with your child. A collection box is located in the Merriam office and now at Donelan's in Acton.

Cultural Enrichment News

Note the date! We have an official date for our annual Cultural Enrichment Willow Books fundraiser. This exciting event will take place at Willow Books in Acton on Wednesday March 9th, 2011. Please mark your calendars! More details will follow nearer the time.

Stay tuned for more exciting Cultural Enrichment events that we are planning this spring for all of our Merriam students. We are able to sponsor these special curriculum-based Cultural Enrichment programs for all of our students thanks to YOUR support!

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning Cultural Enrichment at Merriam, or if you wish to join our committee and/or volunteer your services by previewing or recommending local arts or science shows for our school, please get in contact with one of the current co-chairs:

- Cath Smith at 978-263-4377; cath.a.smith66@gmail.com
- Ronit Ben-Shir at 978-263-9872; rbenshir@jccgb.org
- Lisa Jensen-Fellows at 978-274-2504; Lisa@myfanwy.com

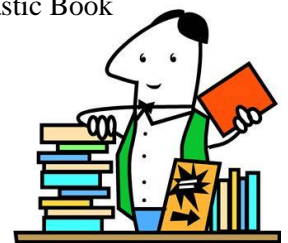
Books - Books - Books

Once Upon a Time....The Scholastic Book

Fair came to Merriam! Students and parents will have plenty of opportunities to find the perfect books by their favorite authors.

The fair will be open February 2 - 11, 2011. Come join the

excitement by volunteering to help with setup, book sales and closing activities. Contact Lisa Sippy at sippylm@msn.com for more information. ...and they all lived, reading their books, happily ever after.



PTO Meeting Report

The arts are alive and well at Merriam! In keeping with its hands-on philosophy of learning, Merriam parents who attended the PTO meeting on October 27th were treated to a very hands-on session as they were introduced to Merriam's art and music programs.

The evening began in the art room with Merriam art teachers Diana Woodruff and Anne Kress. The art curriculum at Merriam consists of three units – drawing, painting, and sculpture – with a carefully planned progression from kindergarten



to 6th grade. After a short lesson in color theory, parents seated themselves at the art tables in front of palettes containing red, yellow, blue, black and white paint and received an assignment: divide

your paper into six original shapes and fill each shape with an original color of your creation. Paintbrushes busily sprung into action and some dazzling new colors were produced!

Though the entire evening could easily have been spent in the art room, the meeting location shifted to the music room where Merriam music teacher Chris Porth drew everyone's attention to a large collection of drums and invited everyone to select one. Seated in a circle, with drums ranging in height from 3 feet to 3 inches, parents tapped out rhythms to an African folk song with a very catchy tune. As parents became more familiar with the song, the drumming became increasingly spirited. When the drumming (reluctantly) came to an end, Chris then gave an overview of the music program at Merriam – again, a carefully planned progression culminating in a 6th grade musical. As an example of the creativity that takes place in the music room, Chris sang an alphabetical listing of Greek gods and goddesses to the tune of Gilbert & Sullivan's "Modern Major General"! (Apollo, Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena....)

By the door of the music room was a lengthy printout entitled "Why I Teach Music" which captured not only Chris's passion for the arts, but surely that of Diana and Anne as well. To

paraphrase a portion of it to include both disciplines:

I teach music/art:

- So you will be human
- So you will recognize beauty
- So you will be sensitive
- So you will be closer to an infinite beyond this world
- So you will have something to cling to
- So you will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness, more good—in short, more life.

Of what value will it be to make a prosperous living unless we know how to live? That Is Why I Teach Music/Art!

Many thanks to Chris, Diana, and Anne for generously sharing their time and creativity, and to the PTO for providing childcare during the meeting so that so many were able to attend.

Parker Damon International Night Slated for May 2011

The planning of this year's 5th annual Parker Damon International Night is underway!!! The event takes place on Friday, May 6, 2011.

We are calling on all parents interested in getting involved in this wonderful event to come to an informational meeting at Merriam on Wednesday, December 8, 2010 from 7:30-9pm in the Merriam Conference Room. Refreshments will be served.

RSVP to jaysrinath@yahoo.com. If you cannot make the meeting and would still like to be involved, please let us know. We look forward to seeing you there! — *Ally Li and Jayanthi Srinath, Co-Chairs of the Parker Damon International Night Committee*

Lost and Found Fair

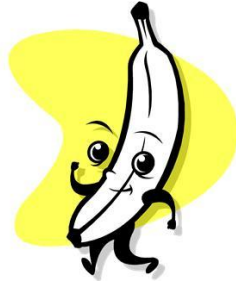
It's time for another Lost and Found Fair! All Lost and Found items will be displayed in front of the Multi-Purpose Room on the lower level, during the week before December Vacation. Please have your children stop by to have a look for any possible lost items. All remaining items will be donated to charity.

**This Month's Recipe:
Banana in a Blanket**

Preparation time: 5 minutes

- 1 (6 inch) whole wheat tortilla
- 1 tablespoon reduced-fat smooth peanut butter
- 1 medium banana
- 1 teaspoon maple syrup or honey
- 1 tablespoon crunchy, nutty nugget cereal

Instructions: Lay tortilla on a plate. Spread peanut butter evenly on the tortilla. Sprinkle cereal over peanut butter. Peel and place banana on the tortilla and roll the tortilla. Drizzle maple syrup or honey on top.



Optional: garnish with more cereal on top.

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prevent problems is crucial. Parents shared a multitude of approaches about how to educate kids, set limits, communicate effectively, and how to deal with all kinds of situations that might arise at home.

I look forward to the fourth and sixth grade parent discussions that will be scheduled soon.

Finally – just a couple of days ago I received some exciting news. Representatives from the Open Circle program will be coming to lead a parent forum for our community on the evening of March 16 (which is a PTO/School Council sponsored event). Please hold this date on your calendars – it promises to be a terrific, informative discussion.

The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo • Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News will be published on Friday, January 7.

Email articles by December 22 to Joe at jb_campo@yahoo.com.