



PARENT NEWSLETTER

OPEN HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 16 and 21, 2015



Welcome to McKinley Elementary School's Open House!
This annual event is planned with several goals in mind:

- To familiarize parents with the curriculum, school procedures, and policies
- To acquaint parents with teachers and staff
- To encourage and strengthen home-school cooperation

This evening you will have the opportunity to meet a very special person... your child's teacher. Teachers spend many hours each day with your child and represent an important adult influence on children's lives. Therefore, it is essential that parents know their child's teacher and develop open lines of communication from the beginning of the school year. You will find that teachers and parents have a common goal:

TO HELP EACH CHILD SUCCEED

At McKinley, we believe that each child CAN be successful. The path to success will vary from student to student, and to accomplish this goal, parental involvement is crucial. Teachers at McKinley encourage parents to take a positive, active role in their child's learning process and will keep parents informed of students' progress throughout the school year.

Sincerely,
Dr. Charles William Lentz, Principal
Mrs. Regina Rausch, Assistant Principal
Mr. Leigh Duncan, Curriculum Specialist

P.S. Please join us in the gymnasium to highlight the coming initiatives of the school year and provide you with an opportunity to meet the staff at McKinley. We look forward to an exciting year.

WHO ARE THE NEW DRAGONS ON STAFF AT MCKINLEY

Mrs. Regina Rausch – Ms. Rausch is joining McKinley this year as the assistant principal and also as the supervisor of special education for McKinley and Rydal Elementary Schools. Ms. Rausch comes to McKinley after many years of experience in teaching and supervising special education. Ms. Rausch was a teacher of special education in Pennsbury School District and has also served as a developmental specialist. Ms. Rausch served as a District Behavior Specialist at Pennsbury School District. She has most recently been a program and training specialist, service coordinator and supervisor of special education for the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. We are very excited to have her joining our team and bringing her wonderful background to assist us in meeting the needs of all of our students.

A SPECIAL GOOD-BYE...

At the conclusion of the school year last year, McKinley bid farewell to many staff members who had become familiar faces in our school community. We were very sad to be losing them as members of our McKinley family, but wish them well as they now embark on their retirements or new assignments.

Mrs. Nancy Matteo – Mrs. Matteo served the students of the Abington School District and McKinley Elementary School for the past 25 years. During that time she served as a valued member of McKinley working in our kindergarten team. She had become a foundation of McKinley's kindergarten program and will be sadly missed as she now begins this next chapter of her life in retirement. We wish her the very best in her retirement.

Ms. Barbara Kelly – Ms. Kelly served the students and staff at McKinley Elementary School as the librarian administrative assistant over the past six years. During that time she also became integrally involved in numerous programs and activities at the school including the school sewing club. We also wish her the very best as she begins her retirement.

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

MACMILLAN/MCGRAW HILL **TREASURES** PROGRAM is a comprehensive research based reading program offering a wealth of high quality literature to engage readers. Explicit instruction and ample practice ensures students' growth in reading proficiency. There are opportunities for both whole group and small group instruction based on needs determined by weekly assessments. Each week's lesson integrates grammar, writing, and spelling for a total Language Arts approach. Parents can stay involved by accessing the MacMillan website for activities geared to both parents and students. The website is www.mhschool.com/reading.

READING INTERVENTION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION uses "Foundations" by Wilson reading (K-3), Wilson Reading, and "Triumphs" a program from MacMillan/McGraw Hill.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION AND INSTRUCTION – This year McKinley Elementary students will be engaged in the Response to Intervention and Instruction Model in grades K-3. Through this model students are instructed in reading levels according to their learning

needs during the tiered component of reading instruction. Teachers at each grade level review student reading needs periodically throughout the course of the school year analyzing individual student unit test scores and DIBELS assessment scores. Through these measures student needs are identified and through tiered instruction these needs are addressed. Each grade level team has designed a plan through which the students at each grade level can be divided according to their learning needs and remediated and enriched based upon these needs.

Students in grades 4-6 will have their individual learning needs met in their classroom through instructional differentiation of the reading lessons and activities to meet their individualize learning needs. Classroom teachers will also be integrating novels into their instructional programming to help to differentiate their learning and support individual student learning needs.

WRITING/LANGUAGE SKILLS – The MacMillan/McGraw Hill Series provides opportunities for the development of grammar, spelling, and writing. Each grade level has also been developing writing skills of students using the DRAGONS framework which was developed in the 2014-2015 school year and which helps students in answering questions in a very pointed direct fashion using supportive information from text and resources.

NOVELS or trade books also are used to augment the reading themes and to help instill a love of reading within each child. In addition, with the new MacMillan/McGraw Hill program, each teacher has a “leveled library” of fiction and nonfiction books to supplement the weekly themes.

HANDWRITING (formal manuscript) begins the second half of kindergarten. Cursive instruction begins in third grade and continues as needed to grade 6. The Zaner-Bloser method serves as the instructional model.

ACCELERATED READER is a computerized reading program that encourages students in grades 2-6 to read for pleasure; participation is optional. Students read books from a list of over 1,000 titles and then test their knowledge and understanding of the book by answering multiple-choice questions generated by the computer. Children earn special rewards and recognition for successful results. The goal of this program is to have students read more and to select higher quality books. Please support your child’s interest in reading by encouraging him/her to participate in the Accelerated Reader program.

SILVER PEN – Grade six students are invited to participate in a writing experience that recognizes outstanding narrative writing. Winners attend a literary guild sharing session and are awarded a “Silver Pen.”

A CELEBRATION OF YOUNG POETS – Poetry writing is encouraged through voluntary participation in the annual “Poetry Slam” contest at McKinley. The contest is open to K-6 students and has become a highlight of the school year. Students write poetry either individually or with teacher’s guidance and voluntarily submit their poems for participation in our annual Poetry Slam. The students have greatly enjoyed sharing their writing prowess with their peers through this experience.

READING OLYMPICS – Many of our children in the intermediate grades choose to become a part of the Reading Olympics program. Through this program children are asked to read a series of novels from a predefined list of books and then work as a team to answer questions relative to these reading selections. This program inspires children to become lifelong readers and learners and is an exciting endeavor for all children who become involved. Fifth

and Sixth Graders, in teams of 8 - 12 students, meet weekly to discuss titles, create questions, and track their reading progress. A county-wide competition is held in April.

READING AT HOME – Students are expected to read as part of their daily homework. Students in grades K-3 are expected to read for 15 minutes every day outside of class. Students in grade 4-6 are expected to read for 20 minutes every day outside of class. Research shows that the more students read independently the more they achieve in all areas of the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

EVERYDAY MATHEMATICS is the math program that is used in grades K-6. The program emanated from the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project and emphasizes verbal interaction and manipulative activities – playful activities that lay the groundwork for symbolic understanding. It is a hands-on approach to learning that combines real life experiences and mathematics. At the fourth grade level, geographical concepts are reinforced via mathematical inquiry. This is our first year implementing the fourth edition of Everyday Mathematics which offers extra practice and enrichment opportunities with each lesson. There is also an increase in the opportunity for students to engage with technology in their understanding of mathematical concepts in classroom instruction. You will notice that the answers to the Home Links are included in the “Parent Math Letters.” Open-ended questions similar to PSSA have been added to unit tests.

MATH FAX is a statewide competition that challenges students in grade 3 to solve a variety of mathematical problems which involve multi-step, computational and number story problems.

PSSA PRACTICE PROBLEMS will continue to challenge and boost children’s problem-solving strategies. Practice problems are now an integral component of our regular math program. “Test practice” not only helps students’ performance, but calms the fear of text anxiety.

MATH OLYMPIAD – Students in grades 4, 5, and 6 will be given the opportunity to compete in the International Math Olympiad for Elementary Schools. This activity consists of five Olympiad contests that are conducted under the direction of Mr. Duncan, our Elementary Curriculum Specialist. The overall goal of the Olympiad is for students to develop an enthusiasm for problem solving that involves creative, logical, and resourceful thinking.

PENNSYLVANIA MATH LEAGUE is conducted in grade 6. The contest provides students with the opportunity to hone their computation skills in mathematics by adding calculators to a timed, mathematical competition.

STATISTICS POSTER COMPETITION is conducted every year for students in all grades at McKinley. This program is sponsored by the American Statistical Association and challenges our students to devise a study they would like to conduct and then chart their data using two types of graphs to display their results. Our students have conducted very interesting studies throughout the years and we look forward to seeing them complete more great research this year.

OTHER CURRICULUM UPDATES

GRADES 4-6 HEALTH – Health Promotion Wave includes a teacher resource binder and blackline masters to enhance current programs (i.e., STOPP, DARE, AIDS, and Aldersgate program).

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES – A curriculum created by teachers of Abington School District is used at grades 4-6.

HOLOCAUST CURRICULUM – Taught at grades 4-6 in the Spring. We have also been fortunate over the past several years through a partnership with the Holocaust Awareness Museum to host the visit of a survivor for students in grades 5-6. This has been a very memorable experience for our students in the past several years.

GRADE 6, HEALTH – Unit on AIDS with Act Smart: HIV/AIDS Education Curriculum is used. This topic is taught in the spring and parents are apprised prior to instruction.

SCIENCE is the STC program which is a hands-on approach to scientific inquiry. Topics are listed by grade levels.

Kindergarten	-	Trees, Wood and Paper
Grade 1	-	Weather, Solids and Liquids, Organisms
Grade 2	-	Life Cycle of Butterflies, Soils, Balancing and Weighing
Grade 3	-	Plant Growth, Rocks and Minerals, Chemical Tests
Grade 4	-	Animal Studies, Ecosystems, Electric Circuits
Grade 5	-	Microworlds, Food Chemistry, Floating and Sinking
Grade 6	-	Science Fusion (Houghton Mifflin)

GRADES 1-6 READING AND MATHEMATICS – “Compass Learning Odyssey” is a technology based program that correlates with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards and assesses a child’s individual progress. This computer based program is monitored by the classroom teacher and Mr. Duncan (Curriculum specialist). The program also is aligned with our Everyday Math Program and the PSSA Anchors.

“Study Island” is another technology based program that reviews important skills that the students are expected to know according to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards. It partners the skill with fun interactive games that the kids enjoy. This program can be accessed from any home computer as well, so please inquire about that with your child’s teacher.

HAPPENINGS AT MCKINLEY

- **GOLDEN SPATULA AWARD** is presented every month to the class, at each grade level, that earns the most points for “McKinley HEART” behavior in the cafeteria. This is followed by a treat and special privileges for those classes during lunch/recess.
- **MCKINLEY HEART PROGRAM** is our school-wide approach to positive behavior (character education program). HEART = Honesty, Excellence, Awareness, Responsibility, & Tolerance. This program has been enhanced this year through the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model. This model encourages student compliance with school expectations for behavior through a strong support system

including positive reinforcement. Additionally, students are specifically taught the expectations of the school in each setting. The school staff works collaboratively to ensure that the same expectations are held at every school setting. At McKinley, a school-wide positive reinforcement reward will be held four times throughout the year for those students who comply with the behavioral expectations of the school. Students will be provided a Platinum Pride Card which will entitle them to be a participant in the school activity provided they have complied with the school expectations throughout the duration from one activity to the next. Additionally, the school will be hosting the Principal's 200 Club which will provide the students with daily incentives for complying with the school behavioral expectations. Through these means the staff will continue to recognize those students who comply with the school's behavioral expectations.

- **MCKINLEY OLWEUS BULLYING PROGRAM** – This internationally acclaimed anti-bullying program will be continuing at McKinley this year. Faculty and staff at McKinley worked last year to develop plans for the continuation of this program at McKinley for the 2015-2016 school year. By developing structured lessons which will be implemented in our school curriculum and holding class meetings, children will be educated about strategies to successfully deal with incidents of bullying and how to work as a school community to confront bullying situations proactively and effectively. McKinley has recently been recognized as a Olweus certified site which is a unique distinction offered to only 12 schools state-wide.
- Log onto our Web Page for an update of school events or to learn more about the “HEART” of McKinley. www.abington.k12.pa.us Click “McKinley”
- McKinley Ambassadors is a program at McKinley intended to have older students serve as representatives of what best illustrates “McKinley HEART” behavior. The students will be utilized to serve as guides and representatives for the school to visitors at various times throughout the course of the school year.
- The McKinley Safety Program will be continued this year to provide intermediate elementary students with an opportunity to take on a leadership role in our school. The safeties will be responsible for working with staff members to enhance a safe and orderly school environment.
- The McKinley Peer Mediator Program (Conflict Busters) provides our intermediate elementary students opportunities to support their peers in resolving conflicts that evolve on the playground and in the cafeteria. These students have been specifically trained in the ability to assist students in resolving their difficulties in a constructive way.
- The McKinley School activity program continues to grow. This year we will be expanding our activities with PTO sponsored activities and we will be adding some additional clubs and activities to address the varied needs and interests of our student population.
- Child Check Phone Number is (215) 663-0430 (option #2). Please call this number if your child will be absent. You can call at any time, but please call prior to 9:00 A.M. the day of your child's absence. When your child returns to school, don't forget that a written excuse for the absence is needed.

HOMEWORK MADE EASY

Sharpen your pencils and let the homework begin! It's that time of year, when children return to the normal routine of homework and preparing to keep up with the workload that

comes with advancing to the next grade level. The start of a new school year marks the end of relaxing evenings and the beginning of more structure, schedules, and yes, stress.

Although most children respond well and thrive with structure, the transition from summer to school can take a little time. To help make homework easy for all, this list has been created to offer a brief list of suggestions. We hope this helps you and your children have a great, stress-free school year!

Purpose of Homework:

- **Reinforce skills which will affect achievement**
- **Teaches responsibility and organization – Two important life skills**
- **Provides a link between home and school**

With this in mind, please review the guidelines for homework listed below and the suggestions delineated in this newsletter. Don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher if homework poses an ongoing problem or becomes a source of stress in your home.

Homework will be assigned on a regular basis, Monday through Thursday evenings, for all students in grades K-6. Following are the guidelines of approximate times for each grade level.

Kindergarten	- 5-10 minutes
Grade 1	- 15-20 minutes
Grade 2	- 20-25 minutes
Grade 3	- 30-45 minutes
Grade 4	- 45-60 minutes
Grade 5	- 60-90 minutes
Grade 6	- 60-90 minutes

1. Find a TIME and PLACE that best suits your child and stick to it. Consistency is important.
2. Do purchase a HOMEWORK ORGANIZER.
3. Have the name and phone number of a classmate handy so when your child forgets his homework your child can call to get the assignment.
4. Plan time for homework and try not to overload your child with too many outside activities.
5. Turn off the TV
6. Oversee homework, but don't control it.
7. Keep supplies easily accessible.
8. Divide the work into smaller tasks, begin with the most difficult.
9. If your child has difficulty doing the assignment, apprise the teacher.
10. Take breaks while doing homework.

Remembering to take homework home develops responsibility and organization. No one is permitted to return to the classrooms after 3:30 P.M. for safety reasons.

COMMUNICATION

SKYWARD MESSAGE CENTER

Again this year we continue the use of the Skyward Message Communication System. Through the Skyward Message System, we are able to communicate important announcements and reminders to the broad school community very quickly. We intend to utilize this system to provide important reminders of upcoming events and cancellations to ensure that this information is provided to families as quickly as possible. In order to make efficient use of this system, it is important to have the most current contact information on record in our school office so that we can reach you in the event of an emergency and through our Skyward Message Communication System. If you should have a phone number change during the school year please notify the office as soon as possible so we may update our records.

ELECTRONIC **THURSDAY ENVELOPES**

This year we are going to continue to “Go Green” at McKinley by digitizing our Thursday envelope distribution. To that end the PTO and school will be working together to scan all of the materials that are typically produced in paper form and distributed on Thursday. We would ask that you provide your child’s teacher with your email address so that we can add you to our recipient list for this purpose. On Thursday you will receive an email containing the mailing that would have normally been distributed through the Thursday evening distribution procedure. We appreciate your assistance with this process as we attempt to reduce the cost associated with the production of the Thursday envelopes. Should you require a paper copy of the Thursday envelope, please notify your child’s teacher so that we can provide this to you.

SKYWARD DATABASE SYSTEM

Over the past several years the school district began a new data base and communication system to further enhance our ability to communicate with our families and keep you updated on your children’s progress. This system, known as Skyward, is an electronic database which provides you valuable information about school events, activities, and your child’s academic progress. Through this system you are able to monitor your children’s attendance and academic progress and remain in contact with your child’s teacher throughout the year as questions or concerns arise. We encourage you to make use of this system on a regular basis so that you can continue to be an active partner with us in your child’s educational growth and progress. In our summer mailing you received information about your logon and password to access the system. Should you have any difficulties, please contact the school office so we can assist you in accessing this valuable communication tool.

