



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

McAlister Intermediate School

Dec. 2013 - January 2014

Volume 1 Issue 3 Page 1

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Early Release

Wednesday, Dec. 4th -

Friday, Dec. 6th

1:00 p.m.

Parent - Teacher Conferences

T.G.I.S. (Thank Goodness it's Saturday)

Saturday, December 7th

3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Suffield Middle School

McAlister's Partnering with Parents

Tuesday, December 17th

8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

McAlister Library Media Center

Winter Concert, Chorus and Band

Tuesday, December 17th

Grade 4 - 9:00 a.m.

Grade 3 - 10:45 a.m.

Grade 5 - 1:00 p.m.

No School

Dec. 23rd - Jan. 1st

Winter Break and

New Year's Day

McAlister's Partnering with Parents

Tuesday, January 7th

8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

McAlister Library Media Center

No School

Monday, Jan. 20th

Martin Luther King Jr. Day



A Message From The Principal

Dear McAlister Families,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well and that you are enjoying the hustle and bustle of preparing for the Thanksgiving holiday. At McAlister, everyone has been diligently working on projects across the district that focus on both student learning and building a positive school climate. In just the short time since our last newsletter, we have been working on programs such as a fifth grade digital learning pilot, a new typing program for all our students, and have been working on altruistic events such as Trick-or-Treat for Pets and Toys for Tots!

As we round out the month of November, we have been working to roll out our digital learning pilot in two of our fifth grade classrooms--Mrs. Tosone and Mrs. Larson's classrooms. The pilot started last week and will continue through March. The goal of the pilot is to develop classroom learning experiences across multiple content areas that align with the Common Core anchor standards as well as integrate technology. The use of technology will also allow students to reflect on their work and the work of their peers in a robust and on-going manner. We will update you on our progress with the digital learning pilot in the upcoming months as we are thrilled with the potential that this program holds!

We have also been working to establish a new typing program for all McAlister students. We hope to increase the keyboarding proficiency of all students, as it is a skill that will allow them greater integration of technology into the fabric of all classroom instruction. Students will be working with typingtraining.com in their classrooms and will eventually work with this program at home. Look forward to learning more about this program in the upcoming months.

Turning to our altruistic endeavors, this year, our season of giving at McAlister is already up

and running! During the month of October we held our Trick or Treat for Pets program in conjunction with Spaulding School. Through this program and under the direction of Mrs. Amber Lonardo, we collected 135 lbs of dry dog and cat food, as well as over 80 individual cans of pet food and 25 boxes of pet treats.

We will continue our season of giving with the Student Council's collection for Toys for Tots. This is one of our absolute most popular donation events--primarily because this is a connection between children; children giving to children. We are so very lucky that the Student Council organizes this event and both collects and delivers hundreds of toys each year. Please consider dropping off a new, unwrapped toy in one of our many drop boxes that will be posted around the school over the next several weeks.

Finally, one of our most-widely attended school events is coming up on Tuesday, December 17. On this day, we will hold our Winter Concert. The times for the Winter Concert are as follows:

Fourth Grade at 9:00 A.M.

Third Grade at 10:45 A.M.

Fifth Grade at 1:00 P.M.

During this concert, we highlight our students' musical learning with songs of the holiday and winter season. This is a day filled with song, joyous energy, and the welcoming of a great number of parents and family members to join us for this performance. Please note that we hope you all join us, and know that we will be working hard to accommodate all of our guests on this special day.

We look forward to all of the upcoming events in the months ahead, and of course are so very appreciative of your continued support and collaboration.

Karen E. Carpenter-Snow

"Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love."

— Lao Tzu



Virtual Backpack



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

[2013-2014 School Calendar](#)

[School Lunch and Breakfast Menus](#)

[2013 2014 McAlister Family Handbook](#)

[Grade 5 Digital Learning Pilot](#)

[Parent Letter about Pediculosis](#)

[Parent Teacher Conference After School Program](#)

[Spaulding Before and After School Program for grades K - 5](#)



McAlister Breakfast Program

Research from many different sources consistently touts the importance of students eating breakfast in order to do their best at school each day. With that in mind, several weeks ago, we were thrilled to initiate our school breakfast program here at McAlister. This program is sponsored by Sodexo, our food service company, and is directed by Sodexo's own, Ms. Katie Brown, a registered dietitian. Student response to the breakfast program thus far includes, "...you get to be with your friends and eat



good food," and that eating breakfast at school is "...one less thing to do before school and you get to see the nice lunch people twice a day!" One student summed it up by simply saying, "It's yummy!" Our students seem to

be both enjoying and benefiting from the program.

McAlister offers breakfast each day between 8:10 and 8:25. Please note that even if students arrive in the waning minutes of the program, they can still

take their breakfast "to go" and bring it back to their classroom to eat at their desk. There is a monthly menu published at the beginning of the month that includes a weekly breakfast meal rotation. Please note that students have the following entree items from which to choose:

- a hot entree (such as breakfast pizza, whole grain French toast, etc.)
- cold cereal
- bagel and cream cheese
- yogurt and graham crackers

Along with a choice of one of the above entree items, students also can choose three sides from selections such as milk, juice or fresh fruit. Breakfast is \$1.75 and students can either use cash or their cafeteria accounts. Please note that the McAlister Breakfast Program also qualifies as part of the free and reduced program for qualifying families.

We hope to continue to grow the menu offerings and the program in general in order to continue to meet the needs of our students and to help them be prepared for all the rigors of the school day!

Building Community Together Through Art—Piece by Piece

On November 6, 7, and 8, McAlister was fortunate to welcome renowned Connecticut mosaic artists Joanne and Bruce Hunter as artists in residence. The Hunters are accomplished artists and mosaic muralists who have worked with countless school districts and cities to create both indoor and outdoor installations. Their residency was the brainchild of McAlister's art teacher--Mrs. Sharon Bowe, and was generously sponsored by the Suffield Foundation for Excellent Schools.

The Hunters, with the help of Mrs. Bowe and volunteer parents, guided our students, teachers, staff, and community members through a project to create mosaic murals depicting the theme, *The Tree of Knowledge*. The theme is based on original works from Mrs. Bowe's art classes. Piece by piece, tiles were laid together to create two beautiful mosaics. Students were taken through the entire process during the Hunters' residency. The mosaic murals are displayed on the first floor of our school and promise to be a highlight for years to come. We are so very grateful for all the hard work of Mrs. Bowe, our students, and all the adults that helped make this special project come to fruition! Please be sure to stop by see these wonderful additions to our school.



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McAlister's Partnering With Parents

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:

Tuesday, December 17th
8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

Tuesday, January 7th
8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

McAlister Library Media Center

Themes:

December - Safety and Security

January - TBD

Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are an excellent opportunity for our families to connect with their child's teacher and discuss their strengths and areas of challenge as learners. Our December Parent Teacher Conferences will occur on the following dates:

Wednesday, December 4
(afternoon conferences)

Thursday, December 5
(afternoon and evening conferences)

Friday, December 6
(afternoon conferences)

This year, we are asking all parents to sign up for Parent Teacher Conferences using the secure, online portal of www.pickatime.com. Please refer to the [letter](#) you received earlier this month that contains your child's login information and directions to sign up for your conferences online. And of course, if you need any assistance, please call the main office at 860-668-3830 as we hope to have 100% attendance at these very important meetings!

The McAlister Way

Demonstrating independence and understanding and appreciating other perspectives and cultures are two of Suffield's Desired Learning Outcomes aligned with 21st Century Skills and College and Career Readiness. At McAlister Intermediate School, "The McAlister Way" is our school-wide approach to support students in demonstrating these skills across all school settings. Grounded in the Six Pillars of Character – Respect, Caring, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Fairness, and Citizenship – "The McAlister Way" is the school-wide behavior code we use to clearly communicate with students "what we do in our school," promoting students' independent, positive behavior choices, and actions reflecting kindness and consideration for others' feelings. Specifically, "The McAlister Way" means:

We **respect** ourselves and others and celebrate the unique qualities in each of us.

We are **caring** and kind to all.

We are **trustworthy** and honest in all we do.

We take **responsibility** for our words, our actions, our work, our property and our mistakes.

We treat everyone **fairly**.

We show **citizenship** by taking care of our school and helping others in our community.

All adults at McAlister are intentionally focused on recognizing students when they show "The McAlister Way" through their positive behavior, and we take genuine pride in celebrating the many examples of respect and kindness that happen so frequently at this great school. One example of this is the implementation of our "**Recess the McAlister Way**" recognition program. Last week, Mr. Ferraro and I visited every classroom and brainstormed with students what "The McAlister Way" looks like and sounds like at recess. Beginning Monday, November 25, our adults supervising recess began formally recognizing students who show "The McAlister Way" at recess. They will do this by filling out a "**Recess the McAlister Way**" recognition form and handing it to students who stand out as demonstrating "The McAlister Way" at recess. Students will bring these forms to the office, where they will be logged and copied. One copy will go home with the student(s), the other copy will be entered into a weekly drawing for a special reward, compliments of Mr. Ferraro and me! The original recognition forms will be prominently displayed on a bulletin board outside the main office. Finally, students will also be recognized each afternoon with a personal congratulations from one of our Grade 5 Student Council members and on our school-wide announcements right before dismissal. We look forward to this new program and working to further solidify "The McAlister Way" at recess!



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Darlene Harris

Pupil Services Secretary

Years of service: 21

What motivates you to be in education?

I enjoy the interesting activities and energy level in the school environment. Although there is a routine each day, there is always the need to be flexible and ready for change. When I first began working in the school system I had no idea how much I would enjoy working with children.

What is your favorite part of the school day?

Our McAlister students do a wonderful job each morning with the announcements. I look forward to the "thought for the day". It's a great way to begin the day!

What does The McAlister Way mean to you?

Actions speak louder than words" says it all. Being someone new to the school this year, it is apparent that the McAlister Way is practiced here every day. The staff works together and finds a way to make each student feel successful and good about themselves.

Veteran's Day Program

On Friday, November 8 we were both excited and proud to hold our annual Veteran's Day Program. This program brings together many facets of our school community--students, parents, staff, as well as our amazing veterans.



The almost 80 veterans who attended represented all branches of the armed services. These men and women also represented our students' parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. They honored us with their presence and together we celebrated this meaningful day.

To launch our program, we had our Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts present the colors while the entire school community stood respectfully silent and extremely proud. Next, third grader Alyssa Haer recited a poem about being thankful to our veterans for all that they have done for our country. Then a group of fourth graders including Gavin Keane, Jami Nadeau, Ella Miller and Gretchen Gustafson performed a Readers' Theater that taught us the definition of a veteran. After that, our fifth graders (Akash Patel, Jenny Valvo, Aidan Borrelli and Luke Lerario) brought us something new in our program for this year. After seeing the memorabilia that our veterans shared with us for this special day, Mrs. Tosone had the idea to use her class' research capabilities to research specific items and present their history and meaning during our Veteran's Day program.



We concluded our program by singing *America the Beautiful* and viewing an online video entitled "We Fought For You". By the time that our Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts retired the colors, we were all filled with a deep sense pride for all our veterans and we gained further insight into their commitment and sacrifice in serving our country.

We are so thankful for everyone's work and effort that goes into such a program--from the veteran's reception beforehand, to working with the students on their presentation, to setting up the entire gym for such a program--we are grateful for our entire school community for making this meaningful event come to fruition.