



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

McAlister Intermediate School

April 2015

Volume 2 Issue 6 Page 1

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Autism Awareness Day

Thursday, April 2nd
Wear Blue to Show Your Support :)

No School

Friday, April 3rd
Good Friday

PTO Board Meeting

Monday, April 6th
7:30 p.m.

BOE Meeting

Tuesday, April 7th
6:30 p.m.

Ag Expo

Wednesday, April 8th
9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, April 9th
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Suffield High School Ag Wing

Partnering with Parents

Open Forum

Wednesday, April 8th
6:30 p.m.
Suffield High Media Center

PBIS Whole School

Morning Meeting

Focused on "Responsible"
Friday, April 10th

Family Game Show

Friday, April 10th
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
McAlister Intermediate School

No School

Monday, April 13th -
Friday, April 17th
Spring Vacation

BOE Meeting

Tuesday, April 21st
6:30 p.m.

Arbor Day

Wednesday, April 22nd
Grade 4

Number the Stars

Fourth Grade
April 27-May 1

"Themselves"

Thursday, April 30
Third Grade
(a dramatic depiction of
immigration in late 1800s)

Internet Safety Presentation

Thursday, April 30
Grade 5 at SMS



A Message From The Principal

Dear McAlister School Community,

Happy Spring! We are thrilled that the warmer weather is upon us and that we can finally start heading outside for recess each day. We are able to go outside for recess if the "feels like" temperature is 20 degrees or higher. We set this standard as we have found that when it feels colder than 20 degrees, the students are just not comfortable being outside for our 20 minute recess period. Know that we are looking forward to the snow melting and the outdoor spaces drying out a little more, as we hope to have all outdoor areas including the soccer field, kickball field, beach volleyball area, basketball court, playscape, and blacktop behind McAlister available to our students. It has truly been a long winter!

You may recall that in our last newsletter we focused our front page article on the importance of our students coming to school each day, on time, and maintaining consistent attendance. I have spoken with many families relative to the importance of their children coming to school each and every day and wanted to share an article I came across in edweek.org relative to student attendance. The article is entitled "*Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight*" and was written by Charles Bruner, Anne Discher and Hedy Chang. The article starts off by stating, "A key ingredient for ensuring success in school is helping children —

at the beginning of their academic careers — get into the habit of attending school every day. While going to school regularly will not by itself ensure that children learn, missing extended periods of school, especially when children are acquiring the basic academic skills that lead to becoming proficient readers, certainly puts a child at risk." Additionally, at one point in the article the authors also point out that, "If children aren't in school, they don't learn. Improving school attendance improves success in school."

We appreciate all our families efforts in supporting regular attendance for their children; know your efforts make a difference each and every day!

And finally, as we approach the last three months of school, know that there are many special activities and events planned. Many are listed on the left of this letter in our "Upcoming Events" section, but even more are posted on the back of our school lunch menu that goes home each month. We appreciate the PTO volunteers, our parents, and our entire staff working together to make all of these events happen as they make the end of the year both meaningful and special for all our students. Thank you as always for your partnership and for your commitment to our students and school,

Karen E. Carpenter-Snow



Virtual Backpack



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

[2014-2015 District Calendar](#)

[2015 - 2016 District Calendar](#)

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

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

[School Lunch and Breakfast Menus](#)

[McAlister Family Handbook](#)

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

[2015-2016 PTO Open Positions Nominations](#)

[Ag Expo - April 8th & 9th](#)
[Family Game Show Night](#)
[Brain Challenge at MIS April 10th](#)

[FREE TUMBLE CLINIC AT USA WILDCATS ALL STAR CHEER & DANCE](#)

[Miss Amazing Pageant - April 18th Windsor Locks](#)

[NCCC - Parent and Sibling Support Groups](#)

[NCCC - Rec. Calendar](#)

[Partnering With Parents Open Forum - April 8th](#)

[SHS Basketball Camp for Girls in Grades 4 - 8](#)

[Suffield Parks and Rec. Spring Programs](#)

[The McAlister Way- Behavioral Expectations Matrix](#)

PTO Presidents Honored for Outstanding Service to Spaulding and McAlister

Christine Phillips and Kendra Wiesel were honored at the Connecticut Association of Schools Recognition Banquet on Wednesday, March 4th at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington. Principals Scott P. Dunn and Karen Carpenter-Snow nominated Ms. Phillips and Mrs. Wiesel for their lasting contributions to both A. Ward Spaulding and McAlister Intermediate Schools as the co-presidents of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Their dynamic leadership, inclusive manner, and never-ending energy are acknowledged and appreciated. They impact our schools in meaningful ways!



PTO Box Tops for Education Drive

Box Tops for Education is one of America's largest school earnings loyalty programs in which over 80,000 K-8 schools participate. Each Box Top collected is worth 10¢ for the school, and the schools may use Box Tops cash to buy whatever they need to support students and their learning. To date, A. Ward Spaulding and McAlister Intermediate Schools have earned over \$10,000.00 as a result of their collection efforts. During our recent drive at McAlister, the third grade students collected the most Box Tops and earned a popsicle party for their efforts! Although we only formally collect Box Tops once or twice a year, we encourage everyone to collect them throughout the year in order to make our formal collections robust and as large as possible.



Upcoming Smarter Balanced Assessments Grades 3-5

Although we will be sending home a formal letter to all families relative to the dates of the upcoming Smarter Balanced Testing at McAlister, we wanted to provide our families with some initial information in this publication. First and foremost, know that the Smarter Balanced assessments replace the former CMTs and are aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards. These assessments focus on English Language Arts and Math and will help us identify strengths and areas of need for both individual students and of our new curriculum. Similar to the CMTs the assessments will be administered for approximately an hour each day over the course of six school days. Smarter Balanced Testing will start during the week of May 4 and continue into the week of May 11 as necessary. Please know that the exact schedule and additional information will be sent to our families in the upcoming weeks.





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 meeting:

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

**McAlister
Main Office
Conference Room**

Suffield Public Schools Teacher of the Year Nominees Announced

In late March Suffield's Teacher of the Year Nominees were announced. These teachers are recognized by their colleagues for their commitment to our students and excellence in teaching. The nominees from all four schools will go through a rigorous process in efforts to select both a building level and a district Teacher of the Year. The teacher selected as the district's Teacher of the Year will be represent Suffield in a statewide competition.

McAlister Teacher of the Year nominees include:

- Mrs. Mary Halzack
- Mrs. Amy Larson
- Mrs. Kelly Meyer
- Mr. Cliff Oliver
- Mrs. Denise Raymond

We congratulate all our nominees and recognize their hard work, commitment to our students and schools, and their dedication to our profession!



Nurses Corner - By Mrs. Fall

Head lice has been the topic of discussion lately and just thinking about these pests causes one to have an itchy scalp! Head lice is ever-present in humans and is a common community problem, but we can approach the problem collaboratively, learning from the facts and focusing on prevention. First, know that anyone can become infested. Preventing infestation and treating it appropriately requires knowledge, on-going vigilance, and attention to detail. I would like to direct you to a website that is endorsed by the National Association of School Nurses which has been a help to many parents and families. Headfirst Lice Lessons (headfirstlicelessons.org) presents the facts: how lice are spread, the symptoms, and the most effective way of treating it. I would also like to emphasize the important role that parents play in notifying the school nurse of an active case in their family. Please know that all names will be kept confidential as we alert other families with children in the same classroom. Mass screening will be conducted only under special circumstances deemed appropriate by the school nurse. As always, you can contact me directly at mfall@suffield.org or 860-668-3830 for more guidance or concerns.





Curriculum Highlights

Grade 3 - By Ms. Halzack

Third graders are now focused on a research unit in reading workshop. During this unit of study, students are learning how to use text features and search tools to locate information efficiently. Initially, students will use topics from our science unit on rocks and minerals to learn the steps in the research process. Students will then choose a topic of personal interest and apply what they have learned to complete their own research. In writing workshop, instruction will focus on informational writing. Students will be learning that an informational writing piece includes an introduction, main ideas and supporting details, and a conclusion. In math, third graders are engaged in a unit titled "Operations with Whole Numbers." In this unit students are focusing on adding and subtracting fluently within 1000 and solving two-step word problems using all four operations. The children are also learning to identify patterns in numbers and to use estimation strategies to determine whether their solutions to problems are reasonable. Third graders are also very excited about a new website that we are using in class called Sumdog (www.sumdog.com). This program provides opportunities for students to practice a variety of math skills both at school and at home. Student user names and passwords were sent home in the March report card. This is a great way for students to practice their multiplication facts and other math skills in an exciting game format!



Grade 4 - By Ms. Mitchell

Fourth graders are very excited to begin the Historical Fiction reading unit! In this unit, the children will have an opportunity to choose books that focus on historical time periods that interest them most.

As a wonderful introduction to the novel, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, the children will be participating in the Hartford Stage Connections Residency Program during the week of April 27th for an hour per day. The children will have the opportunity to perform scenes in the play, in addition to watching the actors perform. It is an amazing opportunity to dig deeper into the text to learn more about the historical events during WWII in Denmark. We thank the PTO for this incredible program!

In writing, students are starting to create opinion pieces. They will be choosing topics that are important to them and voicing their opinions throughout their essay. We cannot wait to see the end result!

We are very excited to pilot a math program called *Go Math!* We will continue to learn about fractions for this month, using this program. The focus will be on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions, as well as learning how to relate fractions with decimals. Be on the lookout for homework from this exciting program!

In science, we will be starting our newest unit called Forces and Motion. The unit builds on your students' natural curiosity with tons of motion activities that explore force, energy, work, friction, push and pull, directional language, critical thinking skills, roll and slide concepts, and speed! We have many hands-on, fun activities in store for the students. One of these activities may involve racing cars... You will have to wait and see what we have in store!





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Grade 5 - By Mrs. Larson

Fifth graders will be exploring fractions during April! Teachers are VERY excited about piloting a math program, *Go Math!* for this unit on fractions. We will find common denominators, add them, subtract them, multiply them and even divide them!



In science, we will focus on learning about the seasons, what causes day and night, and develop an understanding of the phases of the moon. A website that might be helpful is:

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ess05.sci.ess.eiu.mphase/phases-of-the-moon/>

In ELA, students will switch from learning about the research process to a focus on opinion writing. We will further our work with reading and language as we delve into the world of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, and idioms. Groups that began March with opinion writing, will switch to a unit on research.

In social studies, our journey through U.S. History takes us into a new century and new territory! Westward Expansion takes center stage, as we go through the 1800's starting with the Louisiana Purchase in 1804, and continue through the Gold Rush in 1849 ('Hence the term "the 49's"). Students will love learning about all the inventions of this century, as well as the fact that no other century in history, including the one we are in right now, has seen more successful inventions and patents than the 1800's. Included in those 100 years are the zipper, the paper clip, the cotton gin, steam powered engines for boats and trains, and interchangeable parts in our military's weapons. All of these advancements in technology make for a huge jump in industry now that products can be mass produced. Unfortunately, this will also lead to some concerns and issues that will lead us straight into the War Between the States. April promises to bring lots of fun information and hopefully some well deserved warmer weather. Getting excited for every day we get closer to Civil War Day!



American Heart Association Jump Rope for Heart

Last month we introduced you to the American Heart Association's Jump Rope For Heart program. Through this program, students learned about the importance of exercise and the effect it has on the heart. They also raised money to help support and conduct research relative to children with heart disease as well as to help provide educational initiatives. Through our students' collective efforts, we hope that our students reach their \$9,500 goal! We are so very proud of their efforts and proud that our support will help many children.



Springtime Funky Foot Coming to All Grades at McAlister

Permission slips for the spring session of Funky Foot will be posted in the Virtual Backpack over the next week or so. The spring session of Funky Foot starts on April 21 and goes through May 26. Funky Foot runs every Tuesday and Thursday morning from 8:00 to 8:20 a.m., weather permitting! Know that there will be a culminating breakfast for all spring session participants on June 2 (with a rain date of June 4).

American Red Cross First Aid Course

During a cold evening in March, McAlister staff members participated in an American Red Cross First Aid Course that included both CPR and AED use. Our very own Denise Raymond offered the course (as she is a certified trainer in addition to being one of our PE teachers at McAlister) to our staff. All participants are thrilled with their new knowledge, as it will help keep both our students and staff safe! We are grateful to everyone who participated in the course and for Mrs. Raymond for being our leader! We hope to offer this course again in the future.





Grade Level Traditions

The late winter brings our PTO Sponsored, grade level traditions! These are grade level events that include our third grade students roller-skating at Interskate 91, our fourth grade students spending an evening at HealthTrax, and our fifth grade students going to Nomad's Adventure Quest. We are so very grateful to our PTO and all our parent volunteers who make provide these opportunities for our students. Below are photos from both the fourth and fifth grade traditions.



Suffield High School Students Visit McAlister by Senora Nunes

On March 27th, Señor Mangini's Honors Spanish VI class traveled to McAlister Intermediate School to read to Señora Nunes' 3rd and 4th grade students. The senior Spanish class created children's books and coloring books as a project to practice the past and impersonal tenses in Spanish.

Instead of reading the books to their fellow classmates, the students in the upper-level Spanish class wanted to share their finished products and knowledge of Spanish with the school community, especially the new language learners at McAlister. This prompted an overwhelming request by these students to go on a field trip to McAlister to share their knowledge and to give back to the community.



It was a great experience for the high school seniors to reach out to those in their community and to visit their former teachers who have helped shape and educate them. It is also an exciting way for them to end their high school careers in preparation to start their next chapter in life with whatever endeavors may lie ahead in their future. All were excited and pleased to be welcomed at McAlister Intermediate School for this great learning opportunity, and we look forward to additional SHS students coming over to work with our fifth grade students in the near future!



Go Math! Pilot Coming to McAlister

Teachers from both Spaulding and McAlister have been very busy these last couple of months. A group of teachers from both schools met and collaboratively reviewed many different math programs during two professional development days in late February. After careful consideration, these teachers recommended that our K-5 teachers pilot Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Go Math!* resource during the third trimester of our school year. In March, all K-5 teachers were introduced to *Go Math!*, and over the next few weeks teachers will be working to plan and integrate these resources into their classroom instruction for this pilot. We are excited for the opportunity to pilot *Go Math!* and look forward to getting teacher, student, and parent feedback, relative to the math pilot.



Internet Safety Assembly for Our Fifth Grade Students

A letter will be going home to all of our fifth grade families in mid-April relative to an internet safety assembly that will be held on Thursday, April 30. This assembly will be held at Suffield Middle School and will be presented by Scott Driscoll. In this presentation (it is not a lecture), students are informed about what could happen if they share too much information about themselves online. Examples are shared on how things can get out of control quickly and why they have to think about safety while using technology.

Making Reading Special with Mrs. Goguen

Reading is a foundational skill that is necessary in so many of our daily living activities.

There are many special things that you can do to get your child excited about reading:

- Go to the bookstore and buy a book as a reward for positive behavior.
- Let your child stay up an extra 15 minutes as long as they are reading.
- Have a family movie night. Rent the movie version of a chapter book that your child has just finished reading. Talk about how the book compares to the movie.
- Host a book club. Read a chapter book with your child and find the time each week to discuss what you have read.
- Plan a trip to a local museum. Before visiting, go to the library and check out books about things you will see. Have your child share what they have learned as you walk through the museum.
- Visit children's author's websites and encourage your child to write to their favorite authors. Many authors will write back

There are many books for parents that speak to motivating children to read and raising children who love to read. To quote both Kathleen Cotton and Karen Reed Wikelund, *"The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement"*

[Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever](#), by Mem Fox

[The Read Aloud Handbook](#), by Jim Trelease

[Read to Me 2000 Raising Kids Who Love to Read](#), Bernice E. Cullinan



Mrs. Baranauskas's Math Minute

Mathematics is all around us! The following activities represent just a sampling of the many everyday situations that involve mathematics and ways that you can nurture your child's mathematical development through these activities (parentheses indicate appropriate grade levels).

- **Numbers are all around us!** Look for numbers in the environment (e.g. addresses, license plates, exits) and talk about what they mean and how they are used. Sometimes numbers don't represent quantity! Ask children to identify numbers within the environment (Grade 3 up to 1,000; Grade 4-5 up to 1,000,000)
- **Practice counting and making change.** Ask your child to help you figure out how much change you have in your pocket. Let your child pick out the paper currency and change needed to purchase items that have dollars and cents. (Grades 3+)
- **Use sharing** to reinforce concepts like fractions and division. All children are concerned with fair shares! Use problems that involve money to make it real world concepts. What if one cookie is left over and three children want to share it? How can we cut the birthday cake so that we can feed 4 people? (Grade 3)
- **Use the kitchen** to reinforce fractions and mixed numerals. Ask what will happen if you have to double or triple the recipe – How much of each ingredient will I need? What if I want to cut the recipe in 1/2? How much of each ingredient will I need? Don't forget to actually make the treat. The best part is eating it!! (Grades 4-5)
- **Keep charts or graphs** to help you child organize information and keep track of data. A child who is saving his allowance to buy an item might create a chart or graph to show how much he can save over a certain amount of time, as well as use this data to figure out when he can actually purchase the item. Ask questions like, How much money do you have now? How much more do you have to save? How long will it take you to save the money? (Grades 3+)
- **Go grocery shopping** and ask your child what the prices are of items. Have her estimate about how much two of these items would cost, or even better yet, what the total bill will be when you are done. You can use a calculator to keep track of the estimations. She can also help you determine which items are a better buy.



There are many online resources to support children's math learning at home. One of my favorite websites for supporting math at home is called Figure This! (<http://figurethis.nctm.org>) This website includes challenges that your child can do at home as well as provides a "Family Corner" to support you as well.

For more information about reinforcing mathematics in everyday life, see the following websites:

Math at Home: <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Math/mathhome.html>

Going Beyond the Classroom: <http://www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/families>

Parent Roadmaps for the Common Core: <http://www.cgcs.org/page/244>





Staff Spotlight - Ashley Mitchell



**Grade 4
Teacher**

What is your favorite part of the school day?

I love any part of a school day where my students are excited to learn. My goal is for my students to be as passionate about learning as I am. When this happens, it is magic!

Years of Service:

I have been teaching for four years. This is my second year as a classroom teacher. I started as a 5th grade teacher in Hawaii, then taught K-5 in West Hartford, Hartford, and Avon before coming to 4th grade in Suffield! I am so happy to be teaching in such a wonderful community.

What does the McAlister Way mean to you?

My perception of The McAlister Way is that it unites our school community because we are all invested in it! We have clear expectations on how to be kind, respectful, responsible, and safe in the halls, classrooms, buses, cafeteria, etc. With the McAlister Way, we know how to behave appropriately in many types of situations. It is our commitment to making our school a better place!

What motivates you to be in education?

Seeing my students smile everyday, helping one another, and learning! My classroom is a place where students are kind, compassionate, and eager to learn. When I see they are practicing these core values independently, I feel inspired by them. My students are already making a difference in my life; my hope is they will continue to have enthusiasm for learning and compassion for others as they continue to grow.

“The McAlister Way” in Action!

