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MAGNA CHARTER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MARBLEHEAD COMMUNITY CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Math That Meets the Students' Needs

BY MARY MCRAE

The math program at MCCPS is different every year – by design. Each year, the school looks at the students in each grade and designs a program to meet the needs of that population. This ability to create a differentiated math curriculum “is one of the benefits of being a small school,” according to Rebecca Perry, the Math/Science Department Chair.

Math support is offered to students in all grades who are identified as needing reinforcement in math. Students work in small groups, by grade, with math support specialists to further develop skills.

Grades four through six offer an in-class differentiated math program for students who are working ahead of their grade levels. In the seventh and eighth grades, students identified for the Accelerated Math program work in small groups with math specialists on accelerated Algebra I or accelerated Geometry. This year, twelve seventh graders and nine eighth graders are studying Algebra I, and six eighth graders are studying Geometry.

For all grades, the online ALEKS math tutorial plays an important role in the design and implementation of the differentiated math program. ALEKS is designed to allow students to progress at their own pace, with goals set for each child. The software also provides teachers with valuable information on each student's progress that is used in developing the differentiated program.

In the eighth grade, the differentiation extends to the Exhibition project. For the

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Rebecca Perry, Kay O'Dwyer, Ivy Connelly, Matt Cronin, Molly Wright, Pam Miller

Sharing What We Do Best

BY KAY O'DWYER

The Education Reform Act of 1993 states that the purpose of a Charter Schools is “to provide opportunities for innovative learning and assessments, and to encourage performance-based educational programs.” Furthermore, Charter Schools are charged with dissemination of effective practices and programs.

Teachers at MCCPS have successfully created authentic, engaging units and lessons where students assume real-life roles and participate in performance-rich projects that address standards from several different content areas. Think of the fourth grade bridge project where each group includes an architect, a

construction manager, an accountant and a carpenter. Such projects promote student enthusiasm, and when students are engaged in meaningful work, their understanding of the concepts being taught is deepened.

Since the school's inception in 1995, MCCPS master teachers have honed the practice of developing, implementing, and refining standards-driven performance-based assessments. Along with creating and utilizing these engaging, project-based assessments, teachers have been sharing them with colleagues.

Over half of MCCPS faculty has presented professional development opportunities or workshops for their peers at numerous conferences

including the Massachusetts and National Charter School Association Conventions, the National Council of the Teachers of Mathematics, and the Coalition of Essential Schools National Meetings.

MCCPS educators have acted as consultants for the Pioneer Charter School of Science in Everett, Seven Hills Charter School in Worcester, and the Salem Academy Charter School in Salem.

In May 2009, MCCPS was one of only five charter schools chosen to present as part of the study tour “Expanded Learning Time, Making Every Minute Matter” sponsored by the Massachusetts Center for Charter School Excellence.

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2 **Exhibition!**



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4 **Come Hear the Bands!**

“Students here possess a genuine curiosity and a natural drive to find answers.”

— Kaitlin Bishop, French teacher

MAGNA CHARTER

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OUR MISSION

MCCPS fosters a community that empowers children to become capable, self-determining, fully engaged individuals who are critical and creative thinkers committed to achieving their highest intellectual, artistic, social, emotional, and physical potential. We are dedicated to involving, learning from, participating in, and serving our school community and the community at large.

Magna Charter is the official newsletter of MCCPS.

MCCPS

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Hey...What's the Big Idea?

BY LAURA JALBERT

At MCCPS, we believe that children should be treated with respect; global connections should be made to deepen learning; assessments should include more than test scores; and being part of a community means caring about others and taking responsibility for oneself. We promote the integration of knowledge in our students' lives with thematically planned units referred to as **Global Themes**, which provide an opportunity for students to delve deeply into big ideas.

To date, MCCPS has developed seven global themes, which are framed by *Essential Questions and Understanding Goals*. We focus on a different theme each trimester by referencing it in classrooms, across grades and in our daily community meeting. This year's themes are Communities & Individuals, Time & Space, and Conflict & Harmony. Each trimester at MCCPS culminates in a public Exhibition of student work that demonstrates the student's knowledge of content from the academic disciplines while addressing a relevant Global Theme.

This trimester, the Global Theme is Communities & Individuals. At the fourth-grade level, these ideas come to life through the connections made in math and science during the Bridges unit. The different strengths of the students are essential to envision and build successful bridges as they take on roles of architect, accountant, or construction planner. Immigration, another fourth-grade curriculum, by its nature speaks to commu-

nities and individuals. The fourth grade teachers see their roles as "planting the seeds" of these lofty concepts in the younger set so that as they grow, the concepts will take hold and enrich their educational experience.

Throughout the school, Communities & Individuals has been emphasized through the creation of book clubs, lab teams and writing partners. The Global Themes enable a cohesive atmosphere and common purpose across all subjects.

It is important to note that these connections do not occur through happenstance, but by carefully looking at the requirements of the curriculum of each grade and determining how to realize the connections that will remain with the student through adulthood. It is essential to continuously tie the subject-matter to larger ideas that lead to success, beyond the textbook or a state standard.

Now that's a big idea.

NUTRITION NEWS

How Does Our Garden Grow?

Our school garden was a big success this year, due in large part to the hot weather. Our tomato harvest provided us with several months of fresh tomatoes and homemade roasted tomato sauce. We had several kinds of lettuce, zucchini and yellow squash, green beans, cucumbers, sweet peppers, Swiss chard and pumpkins.

Work on the upcoming harvest of the Charter Garden will begin as soon as January and February, with the planting of seedlings. Chef DeSantis will need help organizing and planning and, as always, donations are welcomed. Contact Laura DeSantis for more information.

FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE

HAPPY FALL!

Just a few reminders:

- Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the cold weather with warm shoes/boots, coats, hats, gloves, etc. They will have outdoor recess unless the weather is extreme.
- If your child has a temperature of 100.7 or above, has been vomiting, or has a persistent cough please keep them home for 24 hours.
- Please check your child's head/hair periodically for lice. Contact the nurse with any questions.
- There are several students and staff members with FOOD ALLERGIES. Please be aware of this when you send in food/snacks. Before sending food to a classroom, please check with the nurse.

PTO NEWS

One of MCCPS PTO's main goals is to support our wonderful teachers whenever we can. In an effort to do so, the PTO will be resurrecting the popular Giving Tree, just in time for Exhibition. Please be sure to look for it. The tree will be ripe with teacher support goodies for you to pick and information on what to do next! The Giving Tree will be about the building leading up to the holiday season, if time does not allow you to search it out during Exhibition please stop in when you can.

Two Languages, One Goal

MCCPS Welcomes Two New Foreign Language Educators

BY PAULA GOLD

“I love working with kids,” Spanish teacher Jessica Massanari-Sapp states. “Interacting on a daily basis with children, doing hands-on learning — that’s what I love.”

It is a sentiment ardently echoed by French teacher Kaitlin Bishop. “From a very early age, I loved working with children. That ‘light’ of understanding that flashes across a child’s face is an extremely powerful and beautiful thing to behold, and I am addicted to it.”

Both teachers came to MCCPS this year with a goal of teaching children a new language while exploring the cultural implications other societies have upon our own. “My sincere hope is that my students learn the true value of a second language and its ability to connect them to the greater global community,” says Bishop.

Kaitlin began studying French in the sixth grade

and continued through the honors program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she jumped at the chance to study in France her junior year. While in Paris she taught at l’Ecole Fénelon Sainte Marie, a private school, and credits this experience with her decision to fully pursue teaching.

Jessica Massanari-Sapp’s journey to MCCPS took a decidedly Central American path. While an undergraduate, she spent a semester in Costa Rica, but it was the Peace Corps in Nicaragua, where she worked with fourth through sixth grade students, that solidified her love of hands-on teaching. Massanari-Sapp’s graduate degree in Community Development from the University of



Jessica Massanari-Sapp, Spanish



Kaitlin Bishop, French

Vermont and, later, community-building work in Honduras provided a natural connection to MCCPS. “I’m so impressed by the school’s community-minded ideals,” she says. “A lot of thought is put into everything here, nothing is done by accident.”

Bishop, too, views MCCPS as a place to make a difference. “Students here possess a genuine curiosity and a natural drive to find answers. To have the opportunity to lead such individuals or, rather, to show them how they can find their own paths is a dream come true.”

MCCPS students are given the choice in fourth grade to study either Spanish or French. They receive foreign language instruction twice each week and augment their studies with online tools that include Quia Web, Quizlet, and Rosetta Stone.

NAVIGATOR SPORTS



Soccer Team Undefeated – Again!

This year’s soccer team began with a tryout of over thirty-five players, which was narrowed down to the top eighteen led by the competent team of Coach Shapiro and Coach Eaton. The Navigators have continued their undefeated streak of the last four years, winning at East Boston, South

Shore, Wilmington, and at home. Our sixth, seventh and eighth grade boys and girls came together to create one of the best teams in MCSAO history!



Cross Country Wins Charter School League Championship!

Led by the newly engaged Coach Tara Kelly, the Navigators Cross Country team won three out of four MCSAO (Massachusetts Charter School Athletic Organization) League meets, beating up to nine other schools. The team competed in the Massachusetts Charter School Cross Country Championship on November 6. MCCPS was the clear winner - thirty points ahead of their nearest competitor, Pioneer Charter! Winning this event is a first for MCCPS.

MATH

Continued from page 1

Ramps project, all students must demonstrate a practical application of the required learning standards in math and science, as well as community service learning. However, they have a choice of three levels of complexity: They can measure an existing ramp in the community, decide whether it meets state code, and summarize the mathematical findings in a letter to the building owner. Or they can design a ramp (to code) for a building, and write a proposal letter to the building owner. For accelerated geometry students, a third option is to identify a different piece of adaptable technology based on their study of geometry to add to the project.

Next year, the program will be different yet again, but it will still add up to math that’s right for everyone.

Come Hear the Bands

By MARY McRAE

There's more music than ever echoing through the halls at MCCPS, thanks to an expanded school band program that offers challenge and opportunity to musicians of all skill levels. Instead of a single school concert band, there are now two bands: the Concert Band and the Honors Band.

The Concert Band, under new director Matt Pert, is open to all students in grades 4-8, regardless of skill level. This band presents a wonderful opportunity for students to try their first instrument, or try a new one.

The Honors Band, directed by music teacher Adria Smith, gives more experienced musicians a challenge. Because of the skill level required for Honors Band material, students need to audition with Ms. Smith to join.

"I wanted to design a program that provides student musicians of all skill levels with enough of a challenge to keep them motivated without getting frustrated," says Ms. Smith. "Just as we differentiate by skill level in other study areas, the new arrangement allows us to offer band options



The MCCPS Honors Band practices every Tuesday and Thursday morning.

to meet everyone's needs."

Both bands are accepting new members up through the first two weeks of the second term. Students interested in joining either band should contact Ms. Smith.

Rounding out the school band offering is the Jazz Band enrichment, for advanced musicians who like to improvise. The Jazz Band supports the school's Community Service program by playing concerts at senior centers around the area.

With so much to offer, Ms. Smith is planning a special Music Night to showcase the three bands, music enrichments, and the choir. Stay tuned!

SHARING

Continued from page 1

Currently, MCCPS teachers are working with the Center for Collaborative Education to create an across school performance assessment system that is both valid and reliable, with the potential for influencing state education policy.

This past spring, a group of teachers received a grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to host a conference and provide support for teachers in the surrounding districts. The idea was to collaborate and share ideas to strengthen curriculum/instruction and develop-content rich, engaging and meaningful projects to increase student interest and understanding. Known as FUEL (Forming Units to Elevate Learning), this group presented workshops for the Belmonte Middle School in Saugus and the Briscoe Middle School in Beverly on November 2nd.

Teachers at MCCPS recognize how well students work and learn when they are engaged in meaningful, curriculum-rich projects, thus, they are committed to sharing these best practices to enhance learning and performance for all students.

Kay O'Dwyer, along with being the ELA specialist, is the Chair of the Humanities Department and a member of the FUEL team.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW — COMMUNITIES & INDIVIDUALS

Grade 4

Many Dreams: One Nation

Students will choose a country of origin and assume the role of an immigrant coming to America, write a multi-paragraph narrative describing where he/she came from and why, their journey to America, as well as the immigrant's hopes for a future in America.

Bridges Build Community

Students will assume the jobs of Project Director, Architect, Carpenter, and Accountant as they work together to build a bridge. Bridges will be assessed on the neatness and accuracy of the building plans and finished bridge, cost of the bridge as compared to their proposed budget and how well the finished bridge matches the plans.

Better Days

Students will explore the community of the hearing impaired as they learn American Sign Language. Using the basics of sign language communication they will perform a song on Exhibition night.

Grade 5

Culture Communicates Communities

Cultures have communicated to us across time and through varied means. Students will:

- Use learned math and science skills to become architects and builders with the task of calculating, drawing, and constructing scale model representations of Aztec or Maya pyramids.
- Become historians and museum curators focused on one particular culture studied.
- Become authors and write their own folktale.
- In foreign language classes students will be creating time lines of the Inca, Maya, and Aztec civilizations (Spanish) and Medieval France (French) to compare what events were happening in both cultures at the same time in different parts of the world.
- In art, students will create a relief of an Aztec, Inca, or Maya god. The relief will be based upon a written description of the god.

Grade 6

Africa: Driving Forces

Students will design and build battery-powered cars designed to bring needed aid to Africa. Students will present the cars and information about the vehicle subsystems and the forces that affect them. Cars will be run in the gym.

Africa: Talking Drums

Students will create poetry written in various forms including in the style of an African poet, which will be performed at the Poetry Cafe. Students will also write an essay researched and written about an African poet.

From the MCCPS Board of Trustees

BY CYNTHIA A. CANAVAN, CHAIR

As the current chair of the Board, I want to advise the community of an exciting chapter being written in the story of our Charter School. The Board, the Foundation and the School are engaged in discussions of how to take fund raising for the school to a new level that will enable it to invest in its academic excellence and future financial viability, even if state funding is cut back in the future.

Many parents may not be aware that Charter Schools do not receive funding for “bricks and mortar”. The funding the Charter School receives from the state, referred to as the per pupil expenditure, is the equivalent of what the sending district receives to educate the child in the classroom. There is no appropriation for purchasing or maintaining a building, improvements to classrooms or facilities in general. When a Charter School wants to finance a building, expand its facilities or invest in improvements to classrooms and equipment, it must raise funds, take loans or postpone projects to avoid dipping

“The Board, the Foundation and the School are engaged in discussions of how to take fund raising for the school to a new level that will enable it to invest in its academic excellence and future financial viability...”

into the per pupil expenditure. Last spring the Foundation approached the Board and School about developing policies to set the stage for major fund raising initiatives and capital campaigns. The Board, the Foundation and the School are now working on a policy and the procedures that will set the stage for identifying projects to fund, and set goals to take the school to the next level.

We invite members of the community to join in this effort by volunteering their expertise in development, writing grants or working on capital campaigns. Not only will you find this personally satisfying but you will enjoy meeting and working together with other members of the community.

I feel fortunate that my children attended a school that encourages critical thinking and is based on project-based learning. My two sons, who are both graduates of this school, thrived at MCCPS and had the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in high school. Let's continue to support this school so the succeeding chapters keep getting better for our children.

Counselor's Corner

BY MIKE HOULIHAN

What Are We Doing About It?



Another column about bullying? According to an anonymous survey given to each student in September, 70% of students report that they have not been bullied by another student or group this year. Great!

However, responses to questions about specific behaviors told another story. One out of 3 students report they've been hit or threatened. Another third say they've been called unpleasant names. Whether it was a joking with friends or not, behavior that harms, intimidates, or creates a hostile environment is now legally defined as bullying. So what is MCCPS doing about it?

We're training our faculty and staff to: recognize and intervene when necessary; speak the same "language" regarding bullying behavior; be fair by following a due process; hold all members of our school community to the same standards and expectations.

We're working daily to ensure that students feel their school is a safe place where those around them care for their well-being. In Wellness class and elsewhere students see the power words and actions can have - positively and negatively - through class discussions, activities (such as role plays), and reflection. A bystander can choose to laugh along with name-calling or step up and become a Champion in that moment.

We're educating parents and the larger school community through articles, emails, homework (the media literacy quiz students in grades 5-8 hopefully shared with parents), and presentations.

MCCPS is also collaborating with local schools, counseling centers, and law enforcement on best practices and policy development.

Students may face bullying behavior at school or in their digital media lives, yet in that September survey, over 90% of MCCPS students reported that they feel "always safe" or "almost always safe" from being bullied at school. That's a good start. Now let's continue learning as a community how to make that 100%. Be well!

Grade 7

Community Magazine

Working in groups students will write, edit and publish a magazine. Students will determine article topics, complete surveys, produce tables and charts, create advertisements and design layout for their magazine. Each student in the group will have an assigned role; managing editor; layout designer; copy editor and publisher. In Art class students will design the front and back cover of their magazine.

Cell Simile

“A cell is like.....” Students will finish this simile through a written and visual display comparing a cell to something in their own life. Students will display and demonstrate their understanding of cells as the building blocks of all living organisms. Through the simile comparison students will connect the parts of a cell to the parts of another item.

Grade 8

Public Access Ramps Project

Eighth graders at MCCPS will use their knowledge on slope to determine if access ramps in their community meet state codes. They will compile their data and evidence to prove whether or not the access ramps they found are to code and then write a letter to a public or private official with their findings. Each work group will create a tri-fold presentation summarizing their work. The presentation should include: scale diagrams of the ramps measured, the slope and the graphs of the ramps (line graphs), an equation to represent the ramp, a formal letter summarizing the findings to an official, and a paragraph outlining each group member's contribution to the exhibition project.

MAGNA CHARTER

SOON-TO-BE HAPPENINGS

First Exhibition

November 22, 6:30–8:30 pm

Community Service Day

December 3, 1:00 pm

PTO Holiday Social

December 14

MAGNA CHARTER **November 2010**
What's New(s) at MCCPS

“We believe that fostering community is integral to who we are as a school, and deliberate attention is invested daily to involve, learn from, participate in, and serve our school community and the community at large.”

— Nina Cullen-Hamzeh

Dear MCCPS Families and Friends,

If you've spent any time at all on campus, you've likely experienced our commitment to community collaboration. Parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives have been present throughout the school in record numbers. Countless have attended Community Meeting, many have joined us for lunch, some have taught classes or presented at Community Meeting in their areas of expertise, others have assisted with activities in the classrooms or served on the Board or Board committees. Community members have run Enrichments, chaperoned field trips, helped in the front office, built a stage, substituted for the nurse, worked with the PTO, helped with preparing lunch, fundraising, gardening, and painting, etc. We believe that we are a better school because of this collaboration, and we welcome involvement in the life of the school at every level.

Our determination to build community stretches beyond our doors. MCCPS master teachers have been sharing our best practices with local and international educators (see the article on page 1). Locally, we have presented professional development programs for the Project for

School Innovation and the towns of Beverly and Saugus. Over 140 district teachers have experienced our *FUEL for Students* workshop (more info on our website). Internationally, at the request of Endicott College, we spent two days with educators from the Youth Sports Trust of England as they deepened their understanding of charter schools in the US. A pen pal program with students from Japan has begun, and we're looking forward to making new friends via snail mail. Also, we were invited by British developer, Dan Buckley, to pilot his extraordinary *Personalization by Pieces*, a web-based method of student-driven assessment, reflection, and improvement that connects students with other learners from around the globe.

At MCCPS, visitors are welcome, children are respected, and parents are valued. We believe that fostering community is integral to who we are as a school, and deliberate attention is invested daily to involve, learn from, participate in, and serve our school community and the community at large. I invite you to join us in this exciting work.

Sincerely,
Nina Cullen-Hamzeh
Academic Director