

GREETINGS FROM COOLIDGE SCHOOL

February 24, 2014

www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/coolidge

Dear Families,

Welcome back from what I hope was a restful and fun winter break. With March upon us, all our teachers are excited about the extended learning time that our return to school presents; now we just have to hope for good weather!

This year educators in all grades are working especially hard with their students on reading and writing skills. Why? Well, there are numerous reasons, but the brunt of it is this: new Common Core standards have “raised the bar” for what our students will be expected to do in these areas. For example, in the past students were only tested in Writing in fourth grade- and it was enough to teach students to write a personal story. The challenge was helping students to write an interesting four-page narrative. With new proficiency requirements, students will now be required to write informational pieces as well as personal ones- and to defend their thinking in all subjects to a much greater degree.

What does this look like? At our last PTO meeting I shared English Language Arts samples from the new assessment test. Parents were surprised to learn that as soon as next year our *third* graders will be given two different nonfiction texts and asked to analyze and respond to them in writing. We read through the pieces together, noting that both were about famous Americans. Next we tackled the sample task: *Write an article describing in detail how these people faced challenges to change something in America. Describe in detail why some solutions they tried worked and others did not. Tell how the challenges each person faced were the same and how they were different.* As we worked, we realized that in order for children to be successful, they must have both stamina and skills as readers in the early grades, certainly well before third grade.

No matter how you feel about state testing, children in public schools will have to participate in common assessments for some time to come. After all, these tests help us to see how well we are preparing our students for success. How can you help prepare your child? Start simply: set aside some time for independent reading. Observe your child to see what s/he chooses to read, whether s/he is “really reading” (versus browsing) and/or to record how long the session lasts. More than anything else, this will help you to see where your child needs to focus future efforts. If you have additional concerns or questions please don’t hesitate to get in touch with your child’s teacher.

Happy reading!

Amy

Amy Clouter
Principal

P.S. Please support our efforts to supply your children with additional informational articles!

There are two ways you can help:

1. participate in the TFK drive by returning a booklet OR
2. make a donation to our PTO for *Time for Kids* subscriptions.

We need 65 more completed booklets to reach our goal. Right now our lowest rate of return is in Grades K and 1. Especially if you have a young child, *please help us to secure this important resource.*

IMPORTANT DATES:

February 28	School Store
March 4	Early Release Day- students dismissed at 12:15 NO LUNCH
	PTO meeting, 7 pm in the Media Center
March 5	Young Audience's <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> visits
March 14	School Store
March 21	Clay time, 6:30-8:30
March 28	School Store
March 31	Report cards go home

Please note MCAS dates for third and fourth grade:

March 18	Gr. 4 long Comp
March 19 & 20	Gr. 3 ELA
March 25 & 26	Gr. 4 ELA
May 6 & 7	Gr. 3 Math
May 13 & 14	Gr. 4 Math

FYI

- 1. Fourth Grade Completion Ceremony Planning Meeting** - We are looking for fourth grade parents who are interesting in helping with the Fourth Grade Completion Ceremony in June. There will be an informational meeting **TODAY, February 24th at 3:30** in Miss Finneran's Room.
- 2. Parents, please note that NEXT Tuesday, 3/4/14, there is an Early Release Day in Shrewsbury. This means students will not get lunch at school. Dismissal will begin at 12:15. Please plan accordingly.**
3. Please help our Special Education Department to understand our strengths

and needs by reflecting on your family's experiences on this online survey:
<http://www.maparentcohort2.com>

The results of the survey will assist us in strengthening our communication and partnership with parents. The survey closes on March 21, 2014.

- 4. The first registration for the Elementary Summer Enrichment Program at Oak Middle School and the Middle School Summer Extensions Program at Sherwood Middle School will close on Wednesday, February 26th at 4:00 PM. Details for registration and course catalogs can be accessed through the Summer Enrichment and Summer Extensions links in the QuickLINKS on the SPS district homepage. Please check the course catalogs for exciting and engaging class offerings for grades PK-4 (Oak Middle) and grades 5-8 (Sherwood). A second registration will open on April 15th at 7AM.**
- 5. Please remember to practice safe driving habits in our parking lots. Going slow in the pick up and drop off line and taking that "extra look" is really important, especially in the winter season. Your care for our students and staff is appreciated.**