



The Backpack Bulletin



December 2011

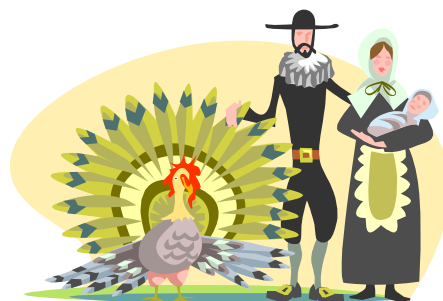
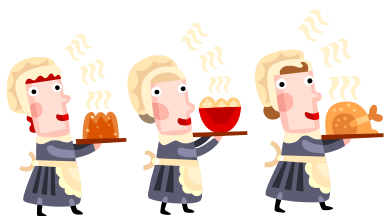
Dear Parents, Staff and Community Members:



The School Department recognizes the importance of involving parents and community members as partners in our educational programs. As a community we have raised expectations for student achievement and to accomplish this mission we must collaborate and communicate to ensure that effective decisions are made for the future of our children. As Thanksgiving approaches we want to acknowledge the many parents and volunteers who serve our students in countless ways. Thank you for sharing your time and talent with the school community.

At this time we would like to acknowledge the contribution made to our former School Committee members, Ed Cafasso, Bill Glynn and Jeff Roy. School Committee work is often thankless and these individuals have contributed many hours in addition to sharing their expertise. Their contribution to our educational program is the legacy they leave and we will miss them and wish them well. Thank you.

Best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving!



Acknowledgements

- **Thank you to our Veterans and to our Men and Women currently in the Armed Services. November marks the commemoration of the sacrifice of those men and women who have served and are serving in the armed forces. Please remember their sacrifice and honor them and their families. Make their service count by volunteering, committing a random act of kindness or just thanking their families.**
- **Massachusetts Association of School Superintendent's Excellence Award winners:**
 - **Susan Mullen**
 - **Sarah MacLellan**



Welcome New School Committee Members

The administration, staff, parents and students would like to congratulate our new or returning School Committee members. Returning members include Chairperson, Paula Mullen, Vice-Chair, Susan Rohrbach, Cindy Douglas and Roberta Trahan. New members include Sean Donahue, John Jewell and Pamela McIntyre. We look forward to working with you and extend a warm welcome.

October Snow Emergency

I want to acknowledge the school personnel who volunteered their time management of our Town-wide shelter at Remington Middle School. On Sunday after the storm, the Town requested to open a shelter in one of our schools. Miriam Goodman, Sally Winslow and Paul Peri were instrumental in getting this accomplished as we assembled Sunday morning. Our food service provider Whitson's rallied to support the town. Joe Amenti/District Manager and Kyle Parson/Chef came in immediately. Food Service Director Vyju Iyengar collaborated to plan and prepare food for those who needed a hot meal. Our school nurses Judy Baillio, Mary Nuzzo, Pattie Elias and Leslie McInnis, supervised a medical station as citizens came to the shelter and needed assistance with medication. As the deadline for college early action applications was on November 1st, the FHS guidance staff set up an office in the Municipal Building and worked with students to get applications completed and mailed. Heather McVay, Josh MacCreery, Jodie Walsh and Brenda Lewis all came in to make sure student needs were met. Special acknowledgement goes to Assistant Fire Chief Paul Sharpe and Office Brian Johnson of the Franklin PD who were instrumental in getting National Grid to make progress at Keller /Sullivan so we did not lose an additional day.



Calendar Update: Last Day of School June 21- we still have 6 days built in.

Advanced Placement Honor Roll



We were notified that the Franklin Public Schools is one of 367 districts nationally that has been awarded with the distinction of being named to the *College Board AP Honor Roll*. Franklin HS was selected based on achievement data that demonstrated an increase in the percentage of students earning 3 or better on AP exams. Additionally, we were honored for our initiative to increase access to the AP program for all students. Through some of our efforts to offer equitable access to our programs more students are able to enroll in the AP program.

Franklin High School Building Project

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) will begin the final approval process for the proposed facility project. There is much information on the Town web site and we urge the community to look at the documents. It is expected that the MSBA will vote on the final project in January. Upon approval the Town Council will discuss and make a decision to put forward debt exclusion. More information to follow.



Lifelong Learning Institute

Lifelong Learning means different academic experiences for different learning communities in the greater Franklin area. A few hundred students participate in the after school music programs that include: The String School of Franklin, The 4th/5th grade Honors Chorus, the After School Elementary Band, and the Private Music Lesson program. Over 500 adults each session participate in Adult Education courses from Art and cooking, to dance and fitness, computers and foreign language, sports, and online classes through Ed2go and Gatlin. Students in kindergarten through 7th grade participate in Solutions, our extended day/enrichment program at six school complexes.

Academic support classes are offered through Lifelong Learning to students who are taking the MCAS in math or Biology this year. Students, who were identified as able to benefit from additional academic support, receive academic tutoring/coaching by Franklin Public Schools faculty members. The FHS Guidance, Science and Math Departments collaborate with Lifelong Learning to offer these services, which are funded with a grant



Kristen Dumas

from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Academic Support Services.

For more information about Lifelong Learning, please visit the website:

www.franklin.k12.ma.us once there, select Lifelong from the top gold banner or email us at lifelong@franklin.k12.ma.us



Race to Nowhere

On October 17th, the Joint Parent Community Council (JPCC), in conjunction with the Franklin Public Schools, sponsored a viewing of the film, “Race to Nowhere,” at the Mercer Auditorium at Horace Mann Middle School.

This nationally acclaimed film explores the pressures and stresses that we as a culture experience today in our daily lives as parents, students, families, teachers and administrators. This documentary explores the personal stories of students and families across the country and the impact of a culture which is overscheduled and a public and private education system that is driven by performance, production, high stakes testing. It is a thought-provoking film which promotes reflection on societal values around achievement in the classroom, in sports and outside activities and in the college application process.

The viewing of the film was very well attended, with over 400 parents, students, teachers and interested community members in the audience. Following the film, there was a panel discussion which included K-12 principals, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, school psychologists, parents and two high school students. The panelists were able to provide a rich discussion about the content of the film and its relevance to their own experiences in today’s fast-paced, demanding world.

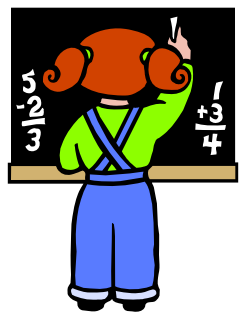
We were very pleased with the overwhelming attendance and positive response to this film and anticipate a second viewing sometime this spring. We will be sure to publicize any encore event on our website and with Connect Ed. Messages.

Can Kids Get Smarter?

We as parents and educators have an opportunity to create a mindset for our children that can support learning or limit it. But first we must examine our own beliefs about learning.

Ask yourself which of the following you believe:

1. a. You are not supposed to understand everything the first time around.
b. Only the bright can achieve at a high level.
2. a. Consistent effort is the main determinant of success.
b. Inborn intelligence is the main determinant of success.
3. a. Mistakes help one learn.
b. Mistakes are a sign of weakness.



If you chose the “a.” answers, you hold liberating beliefs about learning.

If you chose the “b.” answers, you hold limiting beliefs about learning.

Students who believe that they are in control of their accomplishments and do not give up when faced with struggles are far more successful over time.

Here is what smart students do:

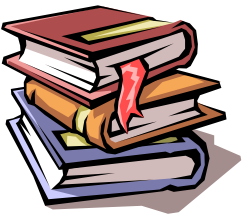
When they face a challenge they ask, “**How do I do this?**” not “Can I do this?” **They realize that mistakes are a part of learning**, not a sign of weakness. **They increase their efforts as things get more difficult** instead of giving up. When faced with a problem, **they seek out different and better strategies or assistance** instead of getting stuck with a strategy that is not working.

We as adults hold the power to convey to our children that, in fact, they **can** get smarter...as long as they realize that **effort is more important than inborn intelligence**.

COMING SOON TO FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL:

This month, Franklin’s food service department managed by Whitsons Culinary Group will begin serving breakfast at Franklin High School. The pilot program is designed to gauge interest and participation among students at Franklin High. The meal will consist of a choice of cereal, muffins, bagels or a hot breakfast sandwich every day. Milk and fruit round out the meal for a great start to the day. Service time will be from 7:00 – 7:25 am in the cafeteria. Cost will be \$1.75. Success of pilot program may lead to expansion of the program to serve breakfast at other grade levels.

BREAKFAST!



Curriculum Mapping

How do districts, schools, and teachers decide what to teach and when students should master specific content? What instructional strategies could be used and what materials might be used? The creation of curriculum maps provides a window into some of these answers. Curriculum maps are a roadmap to the teaching and learning process in each subject, grade, and course. They are designed by teachers and provide an overview of each unit of study and are aligned with the requirements of the Massachusetts Frameworks by subject and grade. While these are consistent for all teachers of the same grade or course, the individual daily lesson plans can vary greatly. This helps us to retain the “art” of teaching yet provide the “science” of planned learning outcomes for all students.

Curriculum maps are created in a simple template format, providing a structured overview of the specific curriculum area. Each map shows the unit title, a pacing guide, the corresponding Massachusetts frameworks, the essential question(s) that guide instruction for the unit, the learning objectives (the key concepts addressed), the skills and vocabulary to be learned in the unit, and some of the assessment possibilities that allow students to demonstrate mastery of these concepts and skills. Also incorporated into the template are the planned common experiences for students, accommodations and/or extensions that may be provided as well as the resources to be used within the unit.

Mastery of the content and skills are the result of the teaching and learning throughout the year. Some skills are developed over many months and are revisited numerous times in the year, while others are taught and learned in a relatively short period of time. Not all students in a grade or course will be exposed to the same material at exactly the same time. Teachers are encouraged to choose the methods of instruction that best suit the students in front of them and their own teaching style to meet these mastery goals.

Franklin teachers are currently working on curriculum maps that meet all of these criteria. This is a continually fluid process that incorporates 21st Century educational needs and skills in an ever-changing world. We are extremely aware that in many cases we are educating our children for jobs that don’t yet exist, but continue to embed in our curriculum maps and instruction an increased emphasis on the skills of communication, collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking along with content mastery.



INCLEMENT WEATHER AND SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION



Maureen Sabolinski
Superintendent of Schools, Franklin

WHO IS WATCHING THE WEATHER?

The Superintendent, school administrators and public safety personnel, carefully monitor the weather conditions during the snow season.



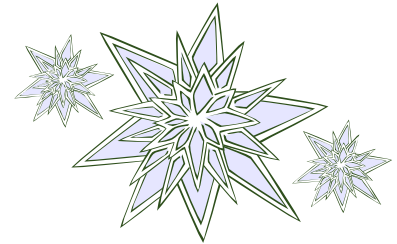
WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR INFORMATION?

School district staff monitor state and local weather forecasts. The Town Department of Public Works (DPW) and Police Department officials test the road conditions and report that information to facilities staff. We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous bus routes in the district. So, even if it looks clear on your street, dangerous conditions may exist in other parts of our town or on highways.

WHAT FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED WHEN MAKING THE DECISION TO CLOSE SCHOOL?

The safety of all district children is our primary concern in making our decision. In deciding whether children will be safe, we look at the following factors:

- Information on road conditions from the town's superintendent of roads and from the police
- Time snow starts to accumulate, and the amount of snow expected
- Weather predictions as to what is expected later in the day
- Building conditions (e.g. whether we have power and heat)
- Parking lot conditions
- Temperature and wind-chill
- The Department of Public Works prediction as to when roads, Walkways and parking lots will be cleared
- Parents retain the right to not send a child to school if they feel road conditions are not safe.



WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

The Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with DPW, the Highway Department, police and the Director of Facilities will make the decision.



WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

The Superintendent must make the decision at the earliest possible time so that radio and TV stations can be notified. Many times the most important information is given at the 5:00 A.M. newscasts, since conditions could have changed overnight. The Superintendent will start the notification process of parents and staff as soon as possible with a target time of 5:00 A.M.

HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?

We use Connect Ed as our inclement weather notification system. Parents and school district staff will receive messages via phones and/or email about the status of school opening/closing during inclement weather situations. **Phone calls will be made beginning at 5:00 A.M. If you do not wish to receive a phone call early in the morning, please contact your child's school to remove your number from our Connect Ed system.** Tune to the following stations for up-to-date information on school closings. Do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

Television: Channels 4 (WBZ), 5 (WCVB), 25(Fox), 7(WHDH) and 10 (WJAR NBC)-R/

Radio Stations: WBZ (1030 AM), WMRC (1490 AM)

Connect Ed: Please keep your contact information current at your child's school



WHAT IS THE PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY?

The safety of your child is first and foremost! The Franklin Public Schools cover a large amount of geography with terrain variations. Conditions can change suddenly. **On days when the weather is questionable but the schools are open, please feel free to exercise your parental discretion to keep your child home. Teachers will be flexible in accepting late work under such conditions.**

WHAT ABOUT THE CONDITION OF THE SIDEWALKS?

During and after any snowstorm, clearing the roads and parking lots are the town's first priority. Second in priority is the clearing of the sidewalks. Ideally, both roads and sidewalks will be sufficiently clear of snow before we will open. However, please be aware that schools may be open before sidewalks are clear. There may, however, be some days when sidewalks will have snow cover that students will have to walk through on their way to school. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the DPW and due to the large number of sidewalks; it may take up to a week to clear them. Parents must exercise their discretion on how students will arrive/depart from school.



THE CANCELTION DILEMMA

The decision to hold or cancel school on a day of inclement weather is always a difficult one. When we cancel school on a winter snow day, it means our students rejoice but parents may have childcare issues and ultimately, we have to add another day of school onto our June calendar. If we hold school on a difficult weather day, that may cause some students to miss school or to slip on snow and ice and get hurt on their way to or from school.

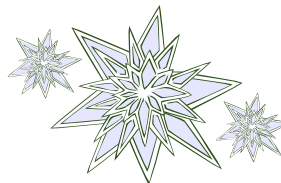
Weather prediction is an uncertain science when you live in New England. However, getting snow in winter is almost guaranteed. Since we will let the safety of our children guide our decision-making with regard to snow days, we ask all parents to make emergency alternative childcare arrangements should the day come when the children have no school or school is delayed.



MAKE-UP DAYS

As per school attendance regulations, students must attend school for a minimum of 180 days and the school year must end by June 30th. If snow days exceed these days, we will adjust the school calendar to use school vacation time to make up days.

Thank you for planning in advance.



Maureen Sabolinski

Maureen Sabolinski
Superintendent of Schools

