

goodTIMES

West Mercer PTA Newsletter

PTA #2.9.35

May 2009

Volume 22, Issue 8

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Past, Present and Future Happenings at West Mercer

-by Rich Mellish, Principal

I'd like to take a moment to comment on a few of the many happenings, present, past and future at West Mercer. They may seem an eclectic group of reflections, but taken together the three following topics say a whole lot about our school.

The School Board Visits West Mercer

On April 9th our school board came to visit West Mercer parents, staff and classrooms. It was a great opportunity to highlight our school. The day started with a conversation with parents. I was impressed with the insightful questions and comments from our community. We discussed our school vision, approach to education and the down-to-earth real issues and challenges facing our school. What was remarkable, though, was not the specific content of the discussion but the thoughtfulness, togetherness and optimism that flavored the moment.

Next, I had the pleasure of leading board members on a tour of classrooms. This was not an orchestrated tour, but a candid snapshot of our school, with commentary. The energy and enthusiasm of our staff and students was self-evident and I was proud to highlight the often subtle signs of powerful teaching and learning, the methods of personalizing learning and the examples of student work. Lists of thought-provoking essential questions (the high level question that guides learning), reading strategies posterizing the walls, and samples of emerging kindergarten writing impressed the board members by demonstrating the thinking, learning and creativity embedded in our classes.

Finally, the staff had time to discuss the progress we have made and the challenges ahead with those who will form future district policy. Again I enjoyed the collaborative discourse.

By the end of the day I was exhausted, but never more proud of the work being done at our school and never more hopeful that we will rally together to meet the challenges presented by our limited budget.

BEACONS & The PTA Budget

As the PTA is developing its 2009-10 budget I presented a few school priorities. At the top of the list was a BEACONS grant. For the last couple years the PTA has given our school a \$20,000-25,000 grant for our School Improvement Plan (SIP). This was used largely to establish our BEACONS program. Though our SIP is moving on to other priorities, the need to fund the BEACONS program continues.

The BEACONS program is our positive behavior support program. Led by our psychologist, counselor, a committee of staff members, and a half-time BEACONS coach. The BEACONS team evaluates and addresses our school climate and the social, emotional and behavioral needs of our students. In essence, the BEACONS program helps make sure we are preparing students to build productive and healthy social behaviors.

(Continued on page 2)

(Principal's Letter—Continued from page 1)

The BEACONS coach works with teachers and groups of students as well as individuals to set and monitor social/emotional and behavioral goals. Our counselor offers counseling services and runs friendship groups. Our psychologist performs more formal evaluations and oversees intervention programs. Together BEACONS works to build support systems and school-wide programs to support all students at their need level.

Why is this a top priority? Here are three key reasons:

- * The social environment of the school sets the stage for learning. High levels of social anxiety significantly limit learning, while students who feel secure, supported and socially safe and cared for at school, will learn at higher levels.
- * Students are interconnected. A student with unmet social needs or behavior supports affects all those students around him or her, whereas when each student is able to successfully fill his or her role in the school community, everyone benefits and can thrive.
- * Each child has unique needs. Some need more social or behavioral support than others.

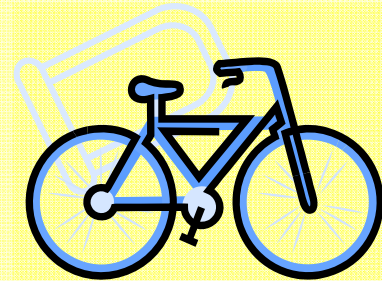
After observing and participating in the BEACONS program for the last 8 months, I have become a firm believer that this program significantly impacts every child, directly and indirectly. This program fills a gap that exists in most public schools. I am thrilled to have this resource for our students, knowing that we have an effective team that diligently seeks the holistic success of each child.

Writer's Workshop

Out of the generous donations for this school year, our PTA is funding an opportunity for 5 West Mercer team members to be trained in the Columbia University's Writer's Workshop program. This is the premier training for the teaching of authentic writing in the classroom. Writer's Workshop structures learning around the individual needs of students and groups of students in the context of authentic writing. In Writer's Workshop students don't just learn writing skills they become writers.

This summer we will be taking the next crucial step toward making Writer's Workshop part of each child's experience in each classroom at West Mercer. This summer's focus is to develop expertise at each grade level. Grade level experts will then help guide and advise the process of training and supporting all teachers to be able to deliver a workshop experience within the next few years. Without our PTA, we wouldn't be able to take this next important step.

- ◆ **Pump tires and get rust off chain: ✓**
- ◆ **Clean up frame, check breaks: ✓**
- ◆ **Get thank you card for spin class instructor: ✓**
- ◆ **Break out new spandex shorts: ✓**
- ◆ **Pack energy bar in back pocket of fuchsia mesh shirt: ✓**
- ◆ **Shave legs: tomorrow**



MAY IS BIKE MONTH!

**FRIDAY MAY 15TH IS WEST MERCER'S
FIRST BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY!**

Bike to school with your kid(s) or, if biking is not an option, walk to school along with the wonderful community of West Mercer families.

Make this a fun event for your neighborhood! Coordinate "bike pools" or "walking busses" with neighbors & friends.

If you live too far to bike or walk, arrange to meet friends living closer to school, bring your bike, ride with a group or join a walking bus!

Hot chocolate, music and snacks will await bikers, walkers and outdoors enthusiasts of all ages.

BIKE (or walk) TO SCHOOL DAY!

JOIN US!

Contact: Christina or Maricel.

christinahendelman@yahoo.com or
maricel@reflectionsloft.com

Dear West Mercer Families,

We are quickly moving into the homestretch of the school year. This year, my attention has been hijacked by the impending budget crisis and the need to solicit donations from our community to “Bridge The Gap” in school funding. If you have not yet had a chance to make a donation, I urge you to come learn more at our Community Forum on Monday May 11th. Enjoy the free childcare and get the facts on the crisis we are facing. If at all possible, I urge you to make your donation by May 11th to minimize the cuts to our staffing.



Even in the midst of this financial turmoil, I want to take a minute to share some good news. I want to compliment Rich Mellish, who, despite balancing budget reductions, has still managed to look forward as the leader of our school. Rich has identified enhanced literacy as a goal for all students at our school. Thanks to your generous contributions to our PTA, we were able to recently offer Rich a grant allowing five staff members to attend some of the best literacy training in the country. Our teachers will be attending the “Writers Workshop” at Columbia University in New York city this summer, and bringing their skills home to share with all the teachers at our school. Thank you to all of you who made this possible.



To those of you who have donated to MISF, thank you for your continued support of our schools. This is why my family chooses to live in such a vibrant, caring community.

Sincerely,
Diane Johnson, PTA President

Teacher Appreciation Luncheon



SAVE THE DATE FOR AN
OLD FASHIONED SPELLING BEE!



When: May 11th & May 18th
(Early release Mondays)
Time: 2:00 - 3:30 (approx.)
Who: Grades K-2 and 3-5
Where: West Mercer Elementary

Look for Sign up sheets and more information to come home in Friday Folders and Wolfwatch soon!



National Teacher & Staff Appreciation Week

Celebrated on May 7th & 8th



National Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week will be celebrated at WME on May 7th and 8th. Room Parents will assist their fellow classroom families in marking these days with creative student-inspired expressions of appreciation for their teachers on May 7th, and on May 8th, each classroom will present collections of cards, or other expressions of appreciation to a special member of our West Mercer Staff. Students are encouraged to recognize any member of our wonderful staff, and each classroom will have a designated member of our staff to recognize the occasion.



SAVE THE DATE!
THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL

2009 WM School Musical
Wednesday, June 3rd at 7pm
Friday, June 5th at 7pm

Are you ready for a frightfully fun time as neighborhood kids visit the House on Haunted Hill? How about a visit with Frankenstein, his six brides and their Batty children? Are you dying to meet a bumbling Dracula and the Mummy Mommy? Is it science you like? Join the Mad Scientist, Boris, Einstein, Winestein and Feinsteins as they entertain visitors from their neighborhood! You can dance and sing to the original score, "The Monster Boogie."

We will offer two public performances: Wednesday and Friday, June 3rd and 5th at 7pm. Additionally, the play will be performed once for all students during the school day on June 4th. Watch your Friday Folders for ticket pre-purchase information in late May.

For questions, contact:

Kathy Gersch
kmmgersch@aol.com,
Diane Johnson dianejohnson5@comcast.net, or Kathy Reitingers reitingers4@comcast.net

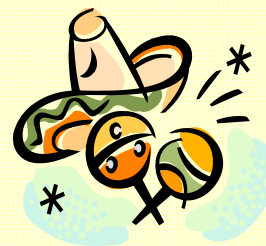


VOLUNTEER SOCIAL
THURSDAY, MAY 21ST



7:00-8:30pm

All West Mercer parents and volunteers are invited to join us on Thursday, May 21st for some socializing & fun! Come to the outside courtyard on the West side of the **Roanoke Inn** for appetizers from the PTA and a no-host bar. Catch up with your old friends and meet someone new! This is the PTA's way of saying **THANK YOU** to all of our wonderful volunteers!



SAVE the DATE for...

WEST MERCER'S SPRING FIESTA!

Tuesday June 2nd
From 5:30-8pm

Our annual Spring Fiesta will be on Tuesday June 2nd from 5:30-8:00. There will be a classroom Open House from 4-5:30 followed by food and fun. The return of the dunk tank with our special dunkees, Mr. Darling, Mr. Melish and Mr. Alin and other inflatable rides. This year we will be offering a build your own taco bar with food supplied by Taco Del Mar. If you are able to volunteer during this event or have any questions please contact Jennifer Sidney at 206-232-3105 or popcorn1103@comcast.net.



Principal's Coffee



The remaining two Principal's Coffees will be meeting at 9:30 in the staff lounge. Here is the coffee schedule for the remainder of 2009:

May 1st, June 5th

Please join us for these relaxed and informative get-togethers with the Principal.

Island Children's Choir

is holding auditions for the 2009-2010 season on

Thursday May 7th from 5-6:30pm and

Thursday May 14th from 5-6:30pm

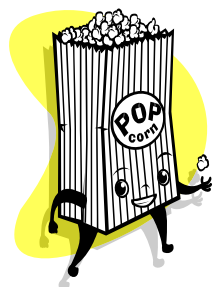
At the Mercer Island Covenant Church

All boys and girls currently in 2nd, 3rd or 4th grades are welcome to audition either day.

No appointment is necessary and nothing needs to be prepared. For further information, contact Marsha Woerner at 206-232-8007 or email at:

islandsound@comcast.net

POPCORN FRIDAY!



The next Popcorn Friday is:
May 15th!

This is the last popcorn Friday—so don't forget your \$0.25!

Contact Karen Upson at kjanemcnally@hotmail.com for information.

PTA PARENT COALITION



Parents of children with **special education and learning differences** now have a PTA parent coalition just for them; it meets the first Sunday of every month.

For contact information and more:

<http://mi-parentsonspcedlearningdiff.wikispaces.com>



PTA General Meeting and Community Forum on our \$2m Budget Gap

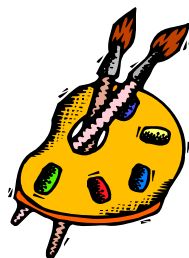
May 11

FREE Pizza dinner at 6pm

FREE childcare—

7pm-8:30 during the meeting!

Mark your calendars for an important evening at school on Monday, May 11th. We will be offering a free pizza dinner starting at 6:00 pm. At 7:00 pm we will have a short PTA General Meeting to vote on next year's slate of officers, and to vote on next year's PTA budget. At 7:30 we will begin our Community Forum discussing the budget crisis and the "Bridge The Gap: Maintain Excellence for MI Schools" fundraising campaign. Principal Mellish will be on hand for questions, along with representatives from MISD, and the MI Schools Foundation. Free childcare will be offered from 7:00 – 8:30 during the meetings. Questions? contact Diane Johnson at dianejohnson5@comcast.net



SUMMER ART CLUB

at WEST MERCER

This summer Ellen Hochberg will be offering summer art clubs at West Mercer. These camps provide an opportunity for kids going into grades 2-6 to explore a variety of art forms in small groups. Students can register for a morning session, an afternoon session or an all day session.

Dates and Themes

- * **Session #1 July 6-10:**
Cartooning and Animation
- * **Session #2 July 13-17:**
Imaginary creatures
- * **Session #3 July 27-31:**
Ancient Egypt
- * **Session #4 August 3-7:**
Puppetry



For more information contact Ellen at ellenhochberg1@comcast.net or 206.232.8004.

FINAL FIFTH GRADE PARENT PEER GROUP MEETING



Please join us Monday, May 11th at 7pm in the IMS Library
for the third and final meeting of the 5th Grade Parent Peer Group.

We will combine with the 5th grade Parent Peer Groups from Island Park and Lak-eridge at Islander Middle School to discuss the upcoming transition to middle school and other issues on our minds as we head into summer. We welcome and encourage all 5th grade parents to attend. Don't miss this unique chance to meet other 5th Grade parents from other schools and discuss topics relevant to our kids. The primary purpose of the PPG is to build a broad-based grade-level parent group who know each other and can be supportive and communicate effectively when issues arise. The Parent Peer Group is an investment, giving us the opportunity to build parent relationships and community now so that as our kids grow and the issues become more complex, we have established a way of talking about issues that matter. We look forward to seeing you there!

Questions? Contact your 5th Grade Parent Peer Group Coordinators:

Judy Chase judy@msn.com, Kris McBurney mommymcb@msn.com, Tammy Federman tammyfed@comcast.net

Wanna get wet???

5th grade student volunteers are needed for the dunk tank at this year's Spring Fiesta. Shifts will be for 15 minute increments and the water is heated. Students will need parental permission and should bring a change of clothes and towel. Scheduling can be flexible, however those who sign up first will be scheduled first so don't delay. Please contact Jennifer Sidney at pop-corn1103@comcast.net or 232-3105 if you are interested.



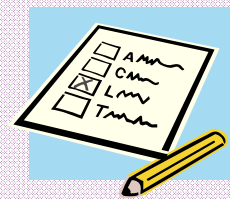
We are looking for a **PARENT PACKET COORDINATOR** for next Fall. This job involves coordinating the assembly and distribution of Parent Packets at the start of school. It is great for someone who likes to organize a project and would be easy to do with a friend. Plus, you will be done in September! If you are interested or know someone who would be a good match for this job, contact Nancy MacCormack at 230-6683.



The 2009 WEST MERCER PTA NOMINATING COMMITTEE places the following names in nomination for the 2009/2010 school year:

- ◆ For office of Co-President Elect:
- ◆ For office of Co-President Elect:
- ◆ For office of V.P. of Fundraising:
- ◆ For office of V.P. of Communications:
- ◆ For office Co-V.P. Family Service Programs:
- ◆ For office Co-V.P. Family Service Programs:
- ◆ For office of Secretary:
- ◆ For office of Co-Treasurer:
- ◆ For office of Co-Treasurer :

Vicki Goldfarb
Aline Kaplanian
Shannon Gottesman
Nan Burton
Michelle Galvin
Stephanie Mehdi
Wendy Mounger
Jill Gormley
Margo Mansfield



THE MERCER ISLAND SCHOOLS FOUNDATION...

THANKS YOU FOR THE GREAT SUPPORT AT THEIR ANNUAL BREAKFAST!



Rising to the challenge, supporters showed up on masse to the 2009 Mercer Island Schools Foundation "Breakfast of Champions" on April 28th at MIHS.

"We owe a tremendous thanks to the incredibly inspiring support shown at the Mercer Island Schools Foundation Breakfast of Champions," said Dr. Gary Plano, MISD Superintendent. *"This outpouring of generosity not only allows us to minimize the impact of the budget cuts from Olympia, it also gives us more traction toward the school districts new 2020 vision."*

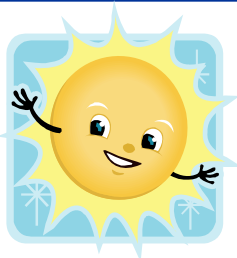
Though the money raised did help reduce the effect of the cuts, more work and support is needed from the community to ensure even less impact to the classrooms, said Penny Yantis, executive director of the Schools Foundation.

"The community of supporters really stepped up," added Yantis, *"and I am continually encouraged by the desire for Mercer Islanders to ensure their schools don't settle for excellence, but continue to strive to get even better - even in tough economic times."*

A giant thanks to everyone: Our Sponsors, Angels, Table Captains and Guests for attending and contributing.

A record crowd was on hand for the morning's program titled, Passion for Learning: Inspiration for Life featured outstanding Mercer Island students. Dr. Plano gave the primary address and MIHS Graduate Jean Enersen, of King 5, emceed the morning's festivities.

The West Mercer meeting will be held on Monday 5/11 from 7:30-8:30pm—the Community Forum called "Bridge the Gap: Maintain Excellence for MI Schools" - see ad on page 5 of this publication.



NEED SUMMERTIME CHILD CARE?

Did you know that Kids Co. provides **full day care** all throughout the summer? Summer time is a wonderful opportunity for your child to **continue learning in a safe and fun environment**. It is also a great way for **children entering Kindergarten** to gain necessary social and communication skills, as well as **make friendships** with children they will see throughout the year. Some of our Summer Day Camp themes include: **Walk the Plank**, a chance for kids to explore all things piratey; **CSI M.I.**, for those budding investigators; **Reality Island**, to challenge the best in us; and **Tidal Wave**, the classic beach party week.

Our first day of summer programs on Mercer Island will be **Monday, June 22nd**, and our last day will be **Friday, August 28th**. We will be **closed** on 7/3 in observance of the Fourth of July and on Friday, August 7th for an All-Staff In-service Training. **Registration materials** for currently enrolled, newly enrolled, and returning families will be available on our website in April, www.kidscompany.org. Please note **we have not increased rates** this year in an effort to make summer care more affordable for all families, and that we will be looking more toward fundraising efforts to help off-set this decision.

If you have any questions about our school-year or summer programs or would like to register or get more information, please contact: Debe Schmidt, Program Director, at debes@kidscompany.org or (206)437-8396.



PTA COUNCIL TASK FORCE BUDGET UPDATE

BRIDGE THE GAP:

MAINTAIN EXCELLENCE FOR MERCER ISLAND STUDENTS

Faced with an approximately \$2 million shortfall, district leadership had to make some tough decisions last month before adopting the 2009-2010 budget. With fewer teachers and some programs eliminated, classrooms throughout our schools will look different when doors open next fall.

The PTA Council Task Force is continuing to help educate our community about how the budget shortfall is impacting our schools and what each of us can do help. The MISF “Breakfast of Champions” held at the end of April was the beginning of a campaign to raise money to soften the blows of the shortfall. This month, leadership from each school will be holding meetings where you can ask questions about the shortfall and how your contribution can help “bridge the gap.” With the goal of restoring staff and programs eliminated due to budget cuts, we are asking our entire community to contribute and raise \$500 per student to “Bridge the Gap and Maintain Excellence for MI Students.” **If your family missed the opportunity at the breakfast, you can donate via the Mercer Island Schools Foundation website www.misf.com, or at the Bridge the Gap Coffee and Conversation at West Mercer on May 11 from 7:30-8:30pm—the community forum called “Bridge the Gap: Maintain Excellence for MI Schools”. Please see ad on page 5 of this publication for more information.**

The MISD, backed by an engaged and generous community, has a history of not letting Olympia define what “basic” education is for our kids. Despite the financial challenges, we are looking forward and the district’s “2020 Vision” is being realized throughout our schools. “Classrooms are being transformed to offer more student-centered teaching and learning – instruction that prepares them to think, collaborate and be creative in our interconnected world,” Plano said.

To stay informed about the upcoming school year, please plan on attending Bridge the Gap Coffee and Conversation at your school and check the district website for the latest information (<http://www.misd.k12.wa.us/>).



A Spring Tradition on MI: Graduate Grams



Every spring, the Mercer Island PTA Council produces and mails thousands of Graduate Gram greetings to the homes of Mercer Island students. Designed to congratulate our hard-working graduating high school students, Grad Grams can also be ordered to acknowledge elementary and middle school students who are graduating to a new level of school. Each hand lettered Grad Gram congratulates the recipient and acknowledges the sender.

Beginning in May, Grad Gram order forms will be available on the MISD website, at the high school, the library, and other Island businesses. You can also e-mail gradgrams@gmail.com and have an order form e-mailed to you. Order Graduate Grams for your graduating seniors, neighbors, your babysitters, your child and his friends! All funds raised through the purchase of Graduate Grams go directly into the MI PTA Council Community Scholarship Fund which honors graduating seniors for their achievement, hard work, and attitude.



You'll put a smile on your recipients' faces while you donate to the Community Scholarship fund.

KEEPING POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN THROUGH ECONOMIC HARD TIMES: A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

by *Laura Falsgraf*



As adults, we are acutely aware of the many economic changes happening for and around us, and it's clear no one has gone untouched. Children are impacted by these changes as well, as they are often aware of increased stress and tension in their families. The way in which a child between the ages of 3 and 12 years old understands and processes these changes depends in part on how significant adults in the child's life handle it themselves.

When children feel confused by what's happening in their lives, they will create their own "story" to explain what's going on. Because younger kids, particularly those between the ages of two and nine, are egocentric and concrete thinkers they often believe they have the power to make things happen. Therefore, they may interpret the events in their lives as somehow being caused by their own thoughts or actions.

Your child or children may be communicating to you through their behavior that they are feeling added stress. Some signs to look for are changes in appetite, changes in sleeping patterns, increased somatic complaints and significant behavioral changes.

Here are some things you can do as parents to help alleviate the stress for children:

- ⇒ Conduct difficult and heated discussions between adults in private.
- ⇒ Make sure you have your own supports in place, such as friends and family to talk to. This helps adults more successfully manage their own stress, lessening the impact on children.
- ⇒ Focus on the positive things happening right now.
- ⇒ Come together as a family. Engage in activities that are fun and helpful, such as preparing more meals at home, playing a board or card game together, or gathering household odds and ends and creating an art activity. This also serves to give kids a chance to see their parents in a relaxed, positive atmosphere.
- ⇒ Do your best to keep diets healthy.
- ⇒ Make sure everyone gets enough sleep.
- ⇒ Keep your routine as consistent as possible. Because there is already change for your family, continuing with the regular schedule helps kids feel safe and balanced.
- ⇒ Most importantly, *talk with your children*.

As with other important life issues, kids should have access to accurate, developmentally appropriate information, and the best source is their own parents. By simply opening up the conversation as a family, you begin to validate and normalize their feelings. This serves to inform them, connect them with their parents and alleviate their anxiety regarding both the situation and their idea they may somehow be responsible. When answering their questions, keep in mind children's age and developmental stage. It's important not to give inappropriate information to younger children.

If you'd like more information or an opportunity to further discuss these issues, Laura Falsgraf, School Counselor, is at West Mercer Elementary School and can be reached by email at laura_falsgraf@misd.wednet.edu or by phone at 236-3438.



Golden Acorn Awards



We are so fortunate at West Mercer to have so many amazing volunteers. We would like to recognize a special few who continually go above and beyond to enrich the lives of our entire school and community.

A Golden Acorn Award is presented, by local PTA units or councils, to a volunteer in recognition of his or her dedication and service to children and youth. Since the beginning of this program, more than 44,000 Golden Acorns have been presented to volunteers throughout Washington State. A contribution in the name of the recipient(s) is made by the honoring PTA to the Washington State PTA Financial Grant Foundation. From these contributions, the foundation is able to provide approximately \$65,000 in scholarships to freshman students entering post-secondary education.

The Golden Acorn Award is given for continued and dedicated service. The individual who receives the Golden Acorn should

have volunteer experience at the local unit level as well as in the community and/or with the school district.

Each year the West Mercer PTA presents Golden Acorn Awards to these extraordinary people who have given selflessly of their time and talents. While these super volunteers would be the last to seek recognition, it can mean a great deal to receive this award. If you know of a deserving individual, please consider nominating him or her by contacting **Tammy Luce** at **luce-family4@msn.com** to receive a nomination form in email—or download at : <http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=cG5YQld4bFFDVUs2WijY01qaVZaYXc6MA> Forms will also be posted outside the PTA room if you'd rather pick one up. The deadline for submitting a nomination is May 9th and the award(s) will be presented at the Volunteer Appreciation Tea in June.

Volunteer Opportunities

The following positions are looking for chair/co-chair for 2009-2010 school year.

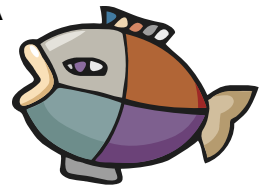
- ◆ **BOX TOPS COORDINATOR** - I'm retiring after 10 years as coordinator. If you are interested, please contact Becky Costello, rkidz@hotmail.com or 236-9459
- ◆ **WOLF WATCH EDITOR AND LISTSERV ADMINISTRATOR** - For more info, please contact Maricel Aziz maricel@reflectionsloft.com or 232-2902
- ◆ **WELCOME COFFEE CHAIR** - For more info, please contact Maricel Aziz maricel@reflectionsloft.com or 232-2902
- ◆ **COPY CORPS** - For more info, please contact Maricel Aziz maricel@reflectionsloft.com or 232-2902
- ◆ **WOLFWEAR** - For more info, please contact Maricel Aziz maricel@reflectionsloft.com or 232-2902
- ◆ **STUDENT COUNCIL ADVISER** - For more info, please contact Maricel Aziz maricel@reflectionsloft.com or 232-2902
- ◆ **FALL FAMILY SOCIALS** - For more info, please contact Jennifer Sidney popcorn1103@comcast.net or 232-3105
- ◆ **HOEDOWN** - For more info, please contact Jennifer Sidney popcorn1103@comcast.net or 232-3105
- ◆ **FIESTA CARNIVAL** - For more info, please contact Jennifer Sidney popcorn1103@comcast.net or 232-3105
- ◆ **COURTYARD CLEAN UP CHAIR** - For more info, please contact Kim Fackrell kfackrell@comcast.net or 232-2566
- ◆ **HEALTHY PUPS COORDINATOR** - For more info, please contact Kathy Reiting reiting-ers4@comcast.net or 230-9493

Remaining Art Enrichment Projects



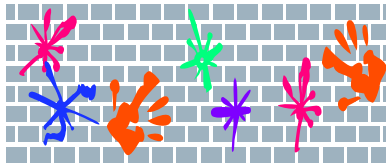
As the school year comes to a close, the students will complete their remaining Art Enrichment projects. The artwork will be on display in the hallways, so come take a look. Below is a summary of what each grade will be doing.

Kindergarten: In May, the students will learn about warm and cool colors and create tissue paper collages. Their final June project is called Royal Dress-up. A volunteer (sometimes the teacher!) will dress up in royal clothes, and the students draw their portrait. I 've heard some parents say this is their favorite project.



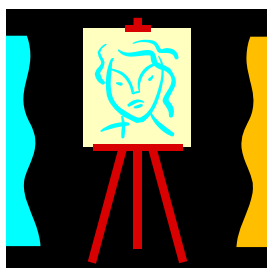
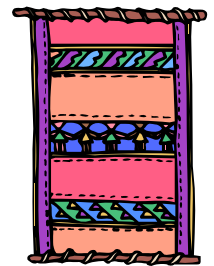
First Grade: May brings one of my favorite projects: Gyotaku Fish Print Lanterns. The students use oil pastels and watercolors to create a vibrant undersea design. Their lanterns can be taken

home and displayed for years. The 1st grade finishes the year with



Monochromatic Caterpillars (dovetailing with their study of caterpillars and butterflies). This project introduces the color concepts of tint and shade.

Second Grade: The artist Jackson Pollack is the subject of April 's art lesson. Working together on a giant 6 ft. by 10 ft. canvas (outside on the playground), the students get messy as they explore Pollack 's splatter style painting technique. During these last months of school, the 2nd Grade is enjoying a favorite



science unit: living organisms. The classroom comes alive as the students study and care for various creatures, including bugs, fish and water snails. To extend their study, the students will learn how Leonardo Di Vinci used drawings to observe and understand the natural world. They will draw their own living organism--a bug--and finish by signing their name modeling

MISD SCHOOL BOARD NEWS



By now everyone has heard of the budget crisis facing the State of Washington. Because education is half of the state budget that crisis will be passed on to our school districts.

Though we do not know the precise impact on Mercer Island yet, our best guess is we will face a budget reduction of \$2 million. The legislature has apparently chosen not to fund Initiative 728, passed about 10 years ago to lower class sizes. It may also choose to ignore Initiative 736, passed to raise teacher salaries.

This will have serious consequences for our district. Though we have done everything we can to keep these cuts from impacting the classroom, they almost certainly will. The district will likely have fewer teachers next year than we do this year.

For the future there are imaginative steps our supportive district may be able to take to maintain the quality of our schools. This year, though, our options are limited and once again the Mercer Island Schools

Foundation and our PTAs are stepping into the breach. During the next three months they will sponsor several fund raising events. The first is the annual Breakfast of Champions, held April 28, which may have passed by the time you read this. If you attended the breakfast and made a donation, thank you. If you did not, please take advantage of the many smaller coffees and the “non-event” they are sponsoring. To avert significant reductions in our faculty we need to raise considerably more than the \$500,000 the Foundation has so far. Please do everything you can.

And just in case anyone has doubts about the value for your money our district is delivering, look at these recently released results from the state’s accountability assessment on three core goals of our educational system.

As always the Board welcomes your comments and concerns. See the district website at www.misd.k12.wa.us/ for additional information and answers to your questions.

Core Indicators	State Target	Mercer Island Performance
1S1 Academic Attainment (Reading/Language Arts)	61.5%	98.18 %
1S2 Academic Attainment (Mathematics)	43.6%	90.00 %
4S1 Student Graduation Rate	69%	92.30 %

S KAMP ROCK! Summer Camp

SUMMER Mercer Island Parks and Rec. Dept.

Ages: 6 – 11 yrs

Begins the week of June 29th, runs thru Aug. 14th from 9am – 4pm, M – F

Theme weeks, field trips, games/crafts and MORE!

\$190/week; extended care available

Location: Community Center at Mercer View

Call 206.275.7609 for info and to register....secure your spot today!

C National Trails Day: “Trail Trek”

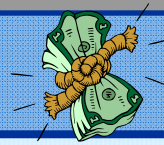
CAMP Join this one of a kind event in Pioneer Park! The event will be designed in a “CSI” mystery solving theme. First 50 kids will receive a Jr. Investigator Kit!

Date: June 6 Time: 1:00pm

Location: Pioneer Park-SE Quadrant

Education Funding Redefinition and Reform Rallies to Adoption!

By Stowe Sprague, Vice President, Mercer Island PTA Advocacy & Legislation



With a late session rally, both the Senate and House passed bill 2261, redefining basic education in late April!

All agree that education is underfunded by the State. Our PTA advocacy team believes that the State would never fund the current awkward system that narrowly defines basic education, and supplements it ad hoc with voter initiatives and a patchwork of program add-ons.

This bill – requiring Governor Gregoire’s signature – is the first step to holistically setting a modern definition of education. It has some but not all of the key elements from the Basic Education Funding Taskforce. On the macro level, it aims to build more accountability (data systems tracking students, school performance) and transparency (model school approach for clear funding expectations). For students, it would fund more credits in both high and middle schools, and begin to set classroom size expectations. It also offers pragmatic revisions such as realistic coverage for transportation costs (paying by the mile driven rather than now, as a crow flies.) It also includes early learning, gifted education, and all-day kindergarten with conditions. For the three most controversial elements – implementation plan, the role and extent of local levies, and teacher compensation – the bill punts to more working groups. Finally, more sobering, the phase-in won’t start at least until 2011, and it will take 9 years to completely roll out.

Why is the definition of basic education so important? Look at your kids' schools and classrooms and think about what you consider to be basic: help for struggling kids, computers, classes of 20-22 for very young grades, more than 5 periods per high school day, and librarians; you'd be surprised to learn that Washington State law does not consider these to be basic education, and thus not its paramount duty to fund. This lack of a modern definition of education is why schools are fundamentally vulnerable to State budget slashing

How far away is the State from adequately funding education today? Our local levies and personal donations subsidize anything partially or not funded by the State (or the

limited Federal funds that Mercer Island receives). Mercer Island has already maxed out on its local levies to the state limit. Consider these facts from OSPI (3/30/09) about statewide spending on education:

- The state provides enough operating funding for districts to afford to buy new textbooks or curriculum every 18 years (all grades, content areas).
- Our class size is the third highest in the nation and state resources provide too few school nurses, counselors, and librarians. The state funds a K-3 class size of 25.8 and a grades 4-12 class size of 28.6.
- In 2007-08 the state paid between 59% and 84% of the salary cost of principals and administrators and 84% to 96% of the salary cost of classified staff that are ostensibly “state funded”.
- Districts subsidize state salary allocations by about \$370 million per year.
- Districts use local funds to subsidize their basic education non-staff operating costs (utilities, insurance, supplies, textbooks and curriculum) by about \$544 million or half their bill.
- Districts subsidize (“to-from”) pupil transportation by \$125 million a year.

Already, our local levies pay for teachers, LAP (learning support program), special education, transportation, additional curricula, athletics, and more. Already, Mercer Island Schools Foundation pays for virtually every new textbook, teacher grants, professional development, and more. Already, PTAs pay for field trips, teacher grants, enrichment and more.

The budget cuts of 2009-2010 (and later) widen these funding gaps. Now more than ever, our community which values education so much, needs to band together to backfill what the State is not providing and shore up its schools. In this way, our school district can stay on track to providing quality education to our children. Children can't risk a 1, 2 or 3 year slump in education; that is a lapse in their education from which they'll never recover.



Field Day

K-2: Tues 6/16 10:00 – 11:30 am

3-5: Wed 6/17 1:30 – 2:45

In a year from now, you may not remember what you did on this Tuesday or Wednesday in June, but your kids will always remember that



their **DAD** came to play at FIELD DAY! We need moms **AND** dads to run games and play, great chance to end the year and make memories with your WM wolf!

Please contact Michelle Swerland if you can play at Field Day 2009!
michelle@swerland.com

Thank You

- ◆ **HILLSIDE PROJECT:** As you drive in and out of WM, have you noticed our nice Hillside lately? A huge THANK YOU to **Jim & Sarah Shannon** for all of their work maintaining this space and organizing our fine WM parent and student volunteers who spend hours making our hillside look good. Jim and Sarah have coordinated with the 5th grade teachers to get all of the 5th grade students contributing something to improve the project. Thank you as well to the hard working parent volunteers who donate their time and muscles to keeping our hillside looking clean. Now that Spring is upon us, keep an eye out for the beautiful flowers near the school entrance and the bus circle that our student and parent volunteers planted last fall. Thanks for making WM an even more pleasant place!
- ◆ **LIBRARY:** A big THANK YOU to all of our fun and helpful parent **library volunteers** from all of the classes! Assisting in the library with book check-in and check-out is a great way to see your child and his/her classmates while it gives Ms. Sylvester more one-on-one and teaching time with the students. This enhances library time for all of the students. Thanks for all you do to make our students' school day enjoyable and productive.
- ◆ **CHESS CLUB:** WM enjoyed another positive and successful Chess Club year thanks to all of the parent volunteers who made it happen and Chess4Life. A tremendous THANK YOU to **Katherine Batalov** for all of her effort as program Chairman this year! Katherine kept everyone organized as well as informed with her fabulous newsletters. There was wonderful feedback on all of our hired coaches and we plan to have another exciting and successful Chess Club next year. We will miss you Katherine but best of luck in your overseas home! Thanks for everything!
- ◆ **Catalina Lou** and **Nancy Meade** for their help in making Popcorn on April 17.
- ◆ **Vicki Goldfarb** for coordinating the INCREDIBLE Teacher Appreciation Lunch on April 24th
- ◆ **The Nominating Committee** for all their hard work putting together next year's slate of officers. Nominating committee members were: **Jill Ashton, Michelle Galvin, Vicki Goldfarb, Mary Jenkins, Lisa Kittlesby, Theresa Magnussen** (chair), and **Greta Stednick**.
- ◆ **Sarah Peshkin** for coordinating Math Week at Recess during the last week of April.
- ◆ **Greta Stednick** for coordinating the Principal/School Board coffee on April 9th.





Shopping Online?



If you are going to be shopping online, please start at www.boxtops4education.com, www.onecause.com (formerly Schoolpop), www.escrip.com, or www.upromise.com first and make sure you have designated West Mercer Elementary as your school to support. There are a large variety of merchants to choose from. We can earn up to 9% of your purchases at some of the merchants.



Box Tops and Campbell's Labels

Save your Box Tops for the Box Tops Store, coming on **May 19th during Lunch Recess**. See your Friday folder for some Box Tops Bucks to attach your Box Tops to. Feel free to make copies of the bucks or go to www.orgsites.com/wa/westmerc for more copies. If you have any questions, please contact Becky Costello, rkidz@hotmail.com or 236-9459



Become Involved! Join PTA!

Are you new to West Mercer? Did you miss the fall PTA membership drive? Do you need a PTA school directory? There is still time to join the West Mercer Elementary School PTA.

The PTA Membership Form is on the school website at <http://www.misd.k12.wa.us/schools/wm/wmpta/pta%20membership%20form.pdf>

Simply print the Membership Form and fill it out, then drop the completed form and check at the school office. You will receive one free PTA school directory per paid membership.

If you have any questions please contact me at: (206) 275-2577 or mac_sue@msn.com. Suzanne Lusnia, PTA Membership Chair

IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

goodTIMES is a monthly PTA publication staffed by West Mercer volunteers and funded by the PTA.

Editors:

Andrea Fitzwilson

&

Michele Schuler

4141 81st Ave SE

Mercer Island, WA 98040

goodtimeseditor@hotmail.com

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May 2009



5/1	9:30am	Principal's Coffee
5/1	11:05am	Spring Concert
5/7	—	Teacher Appreciation Day
5/8	—	Staff Appreciation Day
5/11	6:00pm	Free Pizza Dinner at School
5/11	7:00pm	General PTA Meeting
5/15		Bike or Walk to School Day
5/11	7:30pm	Community Forum-"Bridge the Gap: Maintain Excellence for our MI Schools"
5/19	3:30	PAC
5/21	7-8:30pm	Volunteer Appreciation Social at the Roanoke Inn
5/25	—	Memorial Day Holiday
5/26 & 27		4th Grade Band Tryouts



June 2009



6/2	4-6pm	Open House
6/2	6-8pm	Spring Fiesta Carnival
6/3 & 6/5	7:00pm	The House on Haunted Hill-Spring Musical

PTA BOARD

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Legislative Aleta Finnilla aleta@hugunin.net

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Co-Treasurers Jennifer Sidney popcorn1103@comcast.net

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Committee Chairs Andrea Fitzwilson fitzwilson@comcast.net

Suzanne Lusnia mac_sue@msn.com

Christina Poore christina@poorezone.com

Kim Fackrell kfackrell@comcast.net

West Mercer Staff Nancy Burrill nancy_burrill@misd.wednet.edu

Denise DiPrima denise_diprima@misd.wednet.edu

West Mercer Principal Rich Mellish rich_melish@misd.wednet.edu



Last Day of School - Thursday 6/18 (11:00 am dismissal)