

MACARTHUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTA NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2011



Inclusion and Resources for Children at MacArthur

Allison MacMahon, one of 5 Inclusion Specialists within ACPS, spoke at the December 5th PTA meeting about city-wide efforts to promote inclusive education in our schools. For many parents, the term “inclusion” is new. Inclusion is a philosophy in which all students, irrespective of skill levels, are educated in the general classroom to the greatest extent possible. Effective inclusion implies that: 1) students with disabilities are both interacting with their peers and meaningfully engaged in classroom activities and 2) all students are learning and valued members of the community.

Inclusive education has been the policy within ACPS for years but there has been a greater push in the past 3 years to make it consistent and pervasive throughout the entire system.

A driving force behind inclusion is the belief that children who learn together learn to live together. There is no research that shows any negative effects from inclusion when it is done appropriately with the necessary supports and services. Benefits for general education students include: opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others, more opportunities to interact with teachers, and meaningful friendships. Benefits for special education students include: having peer role models for behavior and academics, reduced fragmentation of instruction with less transitions, and

enhanced participation of students as full classroom members.

To help parents understand the challenges communities face in tackling these issues, Allison MacMahon played a short clip from “Including Samuel”, a documentary by a father about the educational opportunities available for his son living with cerebral palsy. (Note: The documentary trailer shown during the meeting can be found at www.includingsamuel.com.) The film is from the perspective of those with learning differences stemming from impairments in physical, cognitive or emotional abilities. Children can have learning needs related to any area of health and development and meeting each child’s needs is a great challenge.

The Q&A that followed the presentation also focused on the challenges families encounter in order to help make inclusion work. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were discussed in the context of how they work for children with different learning needs in our school. Several parents then asked how to support their own children when they ask questions or face issues that may arise as they participate in an inclusive school community. Everyone struggled to find solutions that balanced information sharing with privacy rights.

For anyone interested, there is a great deal of information about inclusion available on the web. The ACPS

SAVE THE DATE

December 22
American Girl Tea Party

December 23 – 30
Winter Break – No School

January 2
Students Return to School

January 2
PTA Meeting at 7:00 pm in the Library: “Superintendent – Dr. Sherman”

January 16
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday – No School

January 16
National Day of Service – PTA Food Drive

January 17 - 18
Kindergarten Science in the Pod

February 3
Professional Day – No School

Inclusion Page can be found at www.acps.k12.va.us/student-services/inclusion and the ACPS Anne R. Lipnick Special Education Family Resource Center is also available to provide support to staff and families with questions.

Ask the PTA!

Do you have a question about MacArthur or is there a topic you’d like to see covered in the PTA Newsletter? If so, please drop a note in the PTA box in the lobby or contact Karen Bell at kbell@livewiredc.com.

Meet the Teachers

Jeffrey Goodwin

Current Position:

4th grade teacher – math, science, social studies

Teaching Experience:

One year as a Kindergarten para-professional and then five years teaching 4th grade. (This is my 6th year at MacArthur.)

Most Enjoys about Teaching:

Seeing a student experiencing an “Ah Ha” moment (i.e., when a student says “Oh, I get it now!”)

Hometown:

Alexandria, Virginia

Fun Fact:

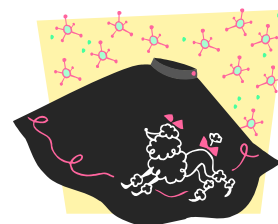
I was a college cheerleader at the Virginia Military Institute.

Benefits of Reading to Our Children

As we all look for ways to help our children, we thought you might be interested in an op-ed by Thomas L. Friedman in the NY Times titled: “How About Better Parents?” The article summarizes research that shows how important it is to read to our children, especially during their first years of primary school. It also identifies the actions that parents can take at home that are most likely to have an impact on academic achievement at school including: monitoring homework, making sure children get to school, rewarding their efforts and talking up the idea of going to college. The article can be found at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/20/opinion/sunday/friedman-how-about-better-parents.html?_r=1&src=tp&smid=fb-share.

Raffle Items for the Sock Hop

The annual MacArthur Sock Hop and Raffle will take place on February 11th. Kid-friendly items will be raffled to raise money for in-school and after-school enrichment activities. Please take advantage of sales during and after the holidays to pick-up items such as Lego sets, board games, video games, Polly Pockets and Bionicles to be donated to our raffle. More information about the Sock Hop will be distributed in the coming weeks.



Superintendent to Speak at January PTA Meeting

Dr. Morton Sherman, Superintendent of ACPS, will speak at the PTA meeting on January 2nd. We encourage all parents to attend and hear what is happening within ACPS.

Book Fair a Huge Success!

The PTA thanks all the parents, teachers and students who supported this year's Scholastic Book Fair. The Book Fair raised over \$11,000 for MacArthur to purchase books and supplies from Scholastic for our library and classrooms. Our loose coin drive to benefit Wright to Read yielded a \$425 contribution to its literacy efforts. Finally, a special thanks goes out to all the parents and members of the community who so generously made donations to help 81 students purchase new books at the fair. All these efforts combined to bring about the most successful book fair ever at MacArthur!



Happy Holidays

The PTA would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!