

## ***Principal's Page – February/March 2008***

### ***ILAP (Improved Learning for All Plan) update***

During the month of November our early release afternoons were all devoted to conducting parent/teacher conferences. Therefore our ILAP staff development work began again during the Month of December, and we have held two full-day professional development sessions as well (in November and January).

We have been continuing our work on developing a common language and approach in the teaching of writing throughout the grades. Classroom teachers throughout grades K-5 have attended one of two district-wide grade-specific sessions on teaching writing through writer's workshop. These sessions were taught by Matt Glover, a principal from Ohio who has worked with noted authors in the area of teaching writing to children – writers such as Lucy Calkins and Katie Wood Ray. We explored strategies to use in writing workshop, conferencing techniques, excellent children's literature for use as mentor texts, topics for mini-lessons and examined pieces of children's writing to discuss what next steps we would take in the conference process. In our school, we have also met within grade level teams to develop model writing lessons. My hope is to provide coverage so that teachers may observe one another teaching this lesson and then bring the lesson back to grade level meetings for fine-tuning and revision (lesson study approach). Our Literacy Leadership Team, with representative teachers from each grade, has met frequently during staff meetings to reflect on the progress we are making in piloting both the Lucy Calkins' Units of Study in Writing as well as the WriteTraits writing materials in the upper grades.

The first and second grade teachers spent two consecutive ILAP afternoons working to revise the learning and celebratory activities that students will experience on Japan Day and Mexico Day, respectively. The focus of the revision has been to more closely link the events of the special day with prior teaching, and to make the events more authentic to the culture being studied. The teachers have been in communication with this year's Japan Day and Mexico Day parent chairs to work together toward a more simplified and focused experience for our students. The third grade teachers met district-wide at the Sudbury Historical Society with Lee Swanson, Director of the Historical Society, and Ann Barysh, one of our Social Studies Coordinators, to begin a collaboration that will take us into the 2008-2009 school year. The goal of this collaboration is to develop a field trip experience, "Sudbury Through Time", where students will research and visit multiple historical sites in Sudbury as part of their studies on colonial America. Our fifth grade teachers worked on a district-wide basis to discuss their experiences using the newly acquired textbook series, *History Alive!* They also reviewed a draft of a new curriculum map, identifying essential questions for each unit of study.

In the area of science, grades 3-5 teachers spent an ILAP afternoon with Karen McCarthy, our Science Curriculum Coordinator, to review the MCAS performance of our fifth graders last spring. We all actually took the Science & Technology assessment ourselves and therefore brought a cross-grade understanding of the range of content and types of questions students face. While the science MCAS test is only given in fifth grade, the knowledge that students accumulate over their years of science investigation is

critical to approaching the test with confidence. We are currently experimenting with strategies for recording essential vocabulary and concepts on worksheets that may follow students through the years, facilitating a review in fifth grade. Grade four teachers have updated the science curriculum map and reviewed newly designed unit assessments. Grade four teachers also spent a district-wide ILAP afternoon with our Wellness Coordinator, Betsy Grams, to review the strengths and weaknesses of our Food Bytes unit of study, a series of lessons designed to teach important concepts related to nutrition and wellness.

Our grade one and three teachers have been using the new *Investigations* math materials this year. Some of our professional development time has been used to discuss the implementation of the new program. During our full-day professional development session, grade three teachers district-wide worked with math consultant, Eileen Gagnon, to preview upcoming *Investigations* units and examine ways to provide differentiation and challenge within the context of the unit. Our Math Leadership Team at Haynes meets regularly during ILAP or staff meeting time to discuss school-based needs in mathematics. Recently teachers from throughout the grades have been working on developing a more concise curriculum-based assessment to be given at the beginning of the year to assess math learning needs of students in the class. This work is related to our school improvement plan goal of identifying strengths and weaknesses in student math performance through the use of a variety of assessment tools.

Our specialists (special education, art, music, P.E., Spanish, library) have also used ILAP time to meet with their counterparts throughout the district, sharing teaching practices and exploring new initiatives. For example, our elementary music teachers met with Michael Moniz of the MIDI Schoolhouse who provided information about the further use of technology in music instruction. Art teachers worked together with Colette Sahely, our Haynes art instructor, to learn about bookmaking techniques. Our Library/Media teachers received an overview and training on Grolier Online, its database and new features.

This is just a glimpse into the range of work we are now able to tackle given the ILAP afternoons that have been added to our school schedule. The time provides essential opportunities for teachers to study and collaborate with one another.

***Do you ever wonder what difference your contribution to HOP makes?***

With ever tightening school-based budgets, parent fundraising makes a huge impact on opportunities for student learning. I certainly remember those days when my children were in elementary school and there seemed to be an endless series of fundraising activities. I'm surprised I have actually run out of the wrapping paper I bought over the years! I know that our HOP organization is always reassessing how to approach fundraising. How does a parent group balance the desire to provide enrichment opportunities for student learning with the stress families may feel in being asked to make contributions throughout the year in different ways. I certainly hope that families genuinely feel comfortable choosing whether or not to make contributions – comfortable

saying “no” with the knowledge that doesn’t mean you support the school any less than anyone else.

I want to take the opportunity to thank our families for the extra financial support the school has received, and to give you a sense of the impact of these fundraising efforts and your generosity. This school year our building-based budget totaled \$67,400, an amount similar to the past two years. Our school budget must provide all of our basic instructional supplies and materials, art program materials, core literature and literacy materials, professional resources, testing materials, media supplies, computer hardware, office supplies, preventive maintenance and more. Last year, HOP contributed approximately \$39,000 to the school, a *significant* amount, especially in comparison to our entire school-based budget. The bulk of this money went toward programs for cultural enrichment (\$13,862). These enrichment programs have provided tremendous opportunities for our students to gain exposure to widely diverse performances. For instance, last year we hosted the following all-school events:

- Arabic Music Dance and Culture, a demonstration of Egyptian dance, Arabic music, language and culture
- Odds Bodkin, a world renowned storyteller & musician
- Chris Poulos, a stunt rider who promotes anti-bullying and messages of self-esteem/self-respect
- Bambidele, a program of African dancing and drumming
- Mad About Math, a performance where we enjoyed a fun focus on math in everyday life

We also hosted grade-specific performances such as:

- Stories from Ghana, a storyteller who focused on the Anansi stories
- Native American Perspectives where students explore native cultures inside a tipi set up outside
- Bay Colony Educators who share stories and artifacts on life during the Colonial and Revolutionary times in New England
- Chinese Rice Sculpture

This is not a comprehensive list. However, I hope that it provides you with a sense of the range and richness of the cultural enrichment events.

HOP monies also supported science enrichment (\$6,985), grade level based activities (about \$2,590 for special days such as Japan Day, Colonial Day, curriculum-related craft activities and special programs) and the purchase of items on a “wish list” developed by our faculty (\$5,400). The items that have been purchased over the past several years have included three ActivBoards, a new audio system for our cafetorium, recess equipment, digital cameras, laptop computers for teachers, laser printer, core literature books on audiotape, resource books for our teacher/parent library, drying racks for the art room and more. We truly appreciate the support we have received from our parents throughout the years!

For a comprehensive list of how monies from fundraising efforts are used, please take the time to visit our HOP web page ([www.haynespto.org](http://www.haynespto.org)) and click on “What HOP Funds”.

***IMPORTANT message for parents who drive their children to school!***

In the winter, traffic flow becomes even more challenging at school. There are fewer parking spaces, less room to move vehicles and often, more cars (as parents do not want their children walking to school or waiting for the bus in bad weather).

In the morning the line of cars waiting to drop off children in the front circle extends out onto Haynes Road. Kim Swain and I, along with our Crossing Guard (Dick Gross), try to be out every morning to oversee traffic. When we have before-school meetings, Dick will be out by himself. The drop-off system CAN work very smoothly IF everyone follows a few simple guidelines –

- Children **MUST** exit your car from the right side. There are cars passing on the left so it is **NOT SAFE** for children to exit on the left. If a child cannot get out on the right side due to car seat placement, childproof door locks or other reasons, you must park your car, and walk them to the sidewalk.
- Drop-off is **ONLY** for children who can independently exit from the car. If you need to get out of the car to help with backpacks or instruments, you must park your car in a parking spot.
- It is critical that you pull your car up as far as you can for drop off. I'm sure you've seen us waving our hands to bring cars up so that four cars can actively drop off children simultaneously.
- After your children have been dropped off, you need to **SLOWLY** move out of the circle. Look to make sure there is no car passing on the left. Please remember that the safety of each child and family far surpasses the need to quickly get to your next destination.
- For pick-up on early release or on regular school days, parents may **NOT** park along the front edge of the circle. The METCO bus will always be picking up children at that location and we have had several instances where there have almost been car/bus collisions, or the bus has not been able to move through the circle.

I probably sound like a broken record on these traffic and safety issues. But, despite repeated newsletter reminders and verbal reminders at the circle, these problems continue. Please pass on this information to any family member or friend who might have occasion to irregularly drop off or pick up your child.

Thank you!

*Susan Carlson*