

THE EXPLORER

A Publication for the Simon Lake School Community

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From the Principal's Desk



Happy New Year! The Simon Lake School staff and students have begun 2009 with a continued commitment to work towards reaching our goal of improved academic achievement. Teachers have been analyzing and discussing student work and incorporating a variety of strategies in their lessons.

The second marking period ended on January 23, 2009. Report cards will be sent home on Wednesday, February 4, 2009. Please plan to take a few minutes to discuss the report card with your child. If you have any questions about the progress of your child, do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

The Connecticut Mastery Test will be administered to students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the month of March. Federal No Child Left Behind legislation now requires states to administer a state-wide assessment to all public school students in Grades 3 through 8.

The Connecticut Mastery Test is designed to measure student performance in the areas of mathematics, reading and writing. It focuses on content that students are expected to master at each grade level. Students are not compared to one another. Their performance is compared to standards and learning goals identified by the Connecticut curriculum frameworks. The frameworks are used as a guide for educators throughout the state in designing instructional programs to bring about continued academic achievement. The results of the CMT's will be made available in the fall.

On January 23rd, Simon Lake hosted the third annual Junior Achievement for a Day Program in grades K-5. Pam Kezer, District Manager for Junior Achievement has been working with members of the PTA, teachers and volunteers who lead the day's activities. Students had the opportunity to learn about how the free enterprise system, business and economics work in the community.

Welcome to Shari Dell, our new intern, who will be at Simon Lake for a year. Shari will be assigned as a substitute when teachers are absent or need to attend a meeting. She will also be assisting in various classrooms. We are happy to have Shari join us.

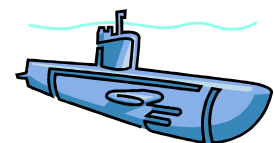
A reminder that regular attendance and arriving at school on time is very important! Students need to be in their classrooms before 8:55 AM, so that they can unpack their back packs and get ready for the instructional day which begins at 8:55. A student who arrives after the official starting time is considered to be tardy. Three tardy arrivals are the equivalent of one absence. Three unexcused early dismissals are also counted as one absence. Parents/ Guardians are asked to refer to the Simon Lake School Policies and Procedures Handbook and the Milford Elementary School Parent and Student Handbook for further information about attendance.

Respectfully,

Donald Busca
Principal

Simon Lake Elementary School

Devonshire Road
Milford, CT 06460
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**February 2009
DATES OF NOTE**

Tue. Feb. 3
New Haven Symphony
Orchestra musicians visit

Wed. Feb. 4
Report Cards sent home

Mon. Feb. 16 — Fri. Feb. 20
Winter Recess — no school

In 2009, the Simon Lake Elementary School will celebrate its 50th anniversary!



Guidelines for School Personnel:

Exposure to cold can cause injury or serious illness such as frostbite or hypothermia. These cold emergencies can occur quickly in children and especially in children with special health care needs, chronic illnesses (i.e. asthma) and sensitivity to cold.

The following recommendations are guidelines for allowing students to remain outdoors at student arrival time in the morning and recess. The guidelines are dependent on a daily check of the current local weather conditions, including air temperature and wind chill, to determine the actual outdoor temperature. This information should be accessed at Weatherbug at www.weatherbug.com. Weatherbug is a national weather service that provides current local weather information. It can be easily downloaded to your computer at no cost.

The following procedure should be followed each morning and lunchtime:

1. The building Administrator or his/her designee will obtain the current weather conditions including air temperature and wind speed from Weatherbug at www.weatherbug.com.
2. If the combined temperature and wind speed (this number is provided by Weatherbug) is below 32°, the children should not wait outside to enter the building in the morning or go outside for recess.
3. An announcement should be made to the staff informing them of the temperature. (The staff must be informed prior to implementation of the cold weather plan that the children should not be outdoors for a combined temperature below 32°.)
4. Before lunch, the building Administrator or his/her designee will obtain the current weather conditions from Weatherbug. If the mid day check of the current weather indicates that the combined temperature has increased to above 32°, it is considered safe to bring children, appropriately dressed for winter weather, outdoors for recess. The building Administrator or his/her designee should announce the current temperature for the staff.

Channel 78 Added to Local TV Mix

All Education, All the Time



What began as a test through Cablevision has become an institution in many homes in our city – the **Milford Government Access Television** channel, familiarly known as **MGAT**. As many of you know, MGAT has operated regularly on Cablevision's Channel 79 since March 2007 and residents have enjoyed viewing both live and taped broadcasts of Board of Aldermen meetings, Board of Education meetings, and various events around town. More recently, the Planning and Zoning Board meetings were added to the mix, and this convenience has clearly been embraced throughout our city.

New Channel 78 Added to the Mix

As part of a grant application pursued by **Mayor James Richetelli**, the MGAT committee of **Phil Kearney**, **Paula Patterson**, **Mike Manente**, and Line Producer/ Broadcast Director **Dennis Guaglianone**, Milford has recently been able to add yet another channel that is dedicated to airing *educational television only* -- **Channel 78**. Launching in mid-December 2008, the channel has featured past education-based events (concerts, awards ceremonies, Board of Ed. meetings, etc.) and has recently expanded to air events at Platt Tech, as well. In essence, it will show 'all things Milford' all the time!

The MGAT team and Guaglianone, with the approval of Schools Superintendent **Harvey Polansky**, have been working with Technology Coordinator **Mary Raccuia** and Asst. Supt. **Mike Cummings** to determine how and what types of material should be collected and prepared for future broadcasts. Our thanks go to the Mayor, Dennis, the Milford Public School team and the MGAT team who have been the driving force for this collaborative work from the very beginning and we urge all citizens who are Cablevision customers to visit Channels 78 and 79 to catch up on what's going on around town! We'll keep you posted on all further developments as they become available.

Statement of Compliance: The Milford Public School System does not knowingly condone discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in employment or assignments in programs or services provided by the Milford Board of Education. Dr. Harvey Polansky, Michael Cummings and Philip G. Russell are designated as the employees who will coordinate compliance with Title IX, Title VI and Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. They may be contacted by mail at the Milford Board of Education, 70 West River Street, Milford, CT 06460 or by phone at (203)783-3400. Questions, concerns or comments regarding possible discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be made in person or in writing to the following: Regarding Facilities: Philip G. Russell, Deputy Superintendent of Operations; Regarding Employment: Wendy Kopazna, Director of Human Resources; Regarding Programs: Susan Kelleher, Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

Budget Time Has Begun!

If it's January, it's budget time! For the Milford Public School system, the budget process usually begins in October of each year, with building administrators and staff meeting to discuss their needs for the **following** school year. Key administrators begin to put these numbers into a framework that will eventually become the formal budget proposal for the district.

In January, Dr. Polansky presented the *Superintendent's Proposed Budget* through a series of workshops designed to explain the details of the proposed budget. Members of the public were welcomed to attend and this program offered an excellent opportunity to understand what the budget includes and the items within each spending category. This year, Budget Workshops were scheduled for January 12, 13, 15 and 20. Once the workshops have been conducted, the budget proposal is voted on by the elected members of the Board of Education with the opportunity to approve or amend the budget, as presented. The final document then becomes known as the *BOE Proposed Budget, 2009-10*.

What Happens After the BOE Has Completed its Work?

From there, the *BOE Proposed Budget* is forwarded to the Mayor, who combines it with the *City's Proposed Budget* on Feb. 1st (according to the City of Milford Charter) and sends the entire package to the city's Board of Finance for their review.

The Board of Finance Review Begins

The Board of Finance is a five member board appointed by the Mayor. One of the duties of the Board of Finance is to review the submitted proposed budgets from the city and the Board of Education each year. The various departments and agencies within the city meet with the Board of Finance over the course of a few weeks in order to present their submittals and to answer questions, if requested. These meetings are all open to the public, as well.

Once the Board of Finance has heard from all of the departments and agencies in the city, they prepare a Board of Finance Recommended Budget and send it on to the Board of Aldermen for their consideration.

The Board of Aldermen Review it Next

The Board of Aldermen then conducts a series of meetings, again, with representatives from every agency and department (all open to the public). Once this is complete, the BOA then conducts an open meeting enabling all citizens to convey their thoughts on the proposed budgets. This meeting is usually very well attended with many people taking the opportunity to share their opinions on the issues at hand.

As the last step in the process, the Board of Aldermen then votes to approve or amend the City and Board of Education budgets for the following fiscal year (in this case, 2009-2010). The final documents become known as the *City Budget, Adopted* and the *BOE Budget, Adopted*. The fiscal year in Milford runs from July 1st through June 30th.

We heartily encourage all citizens to take part in this important governmental process and to learn more about how budgets are created. It is also recommended that you watch the local newspapers for additional calendar information, watch MGAT Channel 78 or 79, or visit the Board of Education website at www.milforded.org.



Where Does Funding Come From?

Like most districts in the United States, funding for education primarily comes from three sources: federal, state, and local.

FEDERAL FUNDING: 2.4%

In Milford, federal entitlement funding accounted for approximately 2.4% of our total operating budget in 2007-08, or about \$2.8 million. Federal funding comes to us in the form of Entitlement Grants, (often referred to as Title I, II, III, IV, V and IDEA funding). The rules for spending this money are very specific and funds cannot be used for items outside those boundaries.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT FUNDING: 12.5%

The Connecticut State Dept. of Education also provides some funding, most notably in the form of Education Cost Sharing grants and school construction reimbursements (building projects, etc.). In Milford, state funding accounted for approximately 12.5% of our total operating budget in 2007-08.

CITY OF MILFORD: 85.1%

The majority of funding for the 2007-08 operating budget, 85.1%, was paid for by the taxpayers of Milford. This funding comes from the property taxes paid each year by Milford citizens for real estate and vehicles (cars, boats, motorcycles, etc.).

How You Can Participate in the Budget Discussions

Before the budget season begins in earnest, it is vital that you educate yourself on the issues the school district faces in operating our school system. The amount of time you spend on this will be minimal, but the benefits may be huge. Join the process and let your voice be heard. There are a few ways to do this:

1. **JOIN THE PTA:** There are PTA/O groups at every school in the district. If you haven't already done so, join. These groups have representation at every level of government: local, state, and national. Find out what the hot topics are, not only for Milford, but beyond as well.
2. **READ EVERYTHING YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON:** Read the budget materials that come forth from both the Mayor's office and the Board of Education. It is important to know as much factual information as possible before you speak about them. Hearing something in passing on the street may not necessarily be fact. Go to the source! Read the budget materials and ask questions of school district administrators when you do not understand what a certain line item is for.
3. **ATTEND BOE/BOA MEETINGS (Or Watch MGAT!):** Watching the legislative process in person will help you understand how things are done. You may personally attend any of these meetings -- or you can stay home and watch them on the Milford Government Access Television (MGAT on Channel 78 or 79/Cablevision). Please join us!
4. **WRITE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS:** In today's electronic world, it is EASY to communicate with our local, state and federal legislators. Here are some *Contact Tips* for you to use to let your elected officials know what you think.

THE PTA 'PORTAL'

1. Go to www.ctpta.org
2. Look for the yellow ovals on the left side of the page. Click on **Legislative Info**.
3. Look for the banner that says **Become Involved!** Then scroll down to learn more detail about the issues under **2008 Platform/Resolutions**.

IMPORTANT NOTE: in this section, we strongly recommend that you read the background information for each of the subjects located there (Automated External Defibrillators, Special Ed Excess Cost Reimbursement, Education Funding Minimum Thresholds, Non-Partisan Boards of Education, Mandate Parental Involvement in Educational Reform). It is VITAL that you understand the issues before you comment.

4. Scroll down to **Cool Tools & Other Information**.
5. Click on the link (listing) that says **Contact Your Legislator**.

To contact any of our *State Representatives* or our *State Senator* in Hartford, you may e-mail them directly:

Barbara Lambert, State Rep., District 118, Barbara.Lambert@cga.ct.gov

Richard Roy, State Rep., District 119, Richard.Roy@cga.ct.gov

Paul Davis, State Rep., District 117, Paul.Davis@cga.ct.gov

Gayle Slossberg, State Senator, District 14, slossberg@senatedems.ct.gov

If you wish to contact our *U.S. Representatives* or *Senators in Washington, D.C.:*

1. Click on that link and **Select the name** of the legislator you wish to contact. Click "Go."
2. Click on the small button **Contact** then **Contact Via Web Form**.
3. **Select the option** you prefer (there are five -- one of which is "Compose Your Own Letter").
4. **Complete the contact information** so the legislator may contact you, if needed.

If you wish to contact *Governor Rell:*

1. Click on that link and then select the **Online Forms** button at the top of the page.
2. Click on the **Voice your Opinion** link. You will see a drop down menu next to "I want to share my views about ..."
Select the topic you wish to speak about.
3. **Complete** the rest of the contact information requested.

If you wish to contact our *State Education Committee:*

1. Click on that link and find the second bullet (middle of the page) "For more information ..." and click on **Education Committee**.
2. Click on **Contact Information for Education Members**.
3. **Send an e-mail message** to any/all of the legislators found on the committee member list. Please note: **Paul Davis** is one of our local representatives and he also happens to be a member of the State Education Committee.

PTA Corner

www.teacherweb.com/ct/simonlake/pta

The Simon Lake PTA would like to thank all the parents who volunteered for Junior Achievement Day on January 23. It was a great success because of your involvement!

The PTA has arranged for an evening fundraiser to be held on Monday, February 9th at Cookin Dinners in Norwalk. Please consider joining us for this fun evening of cooking and supporting our school. For information about Cookin Dinners, visit their website at www.cookindinners.com. Details about the event will be sent home with students shortly.

The Spring Fundraiser will begin Thursday, February 12th; materials will be sent home with students that day.

Collection of "Boxtops for Education" is ongoing so please keep clipping: from our fall collection we received a check for over \$500! Keep an eye out for the next boxtop contest coming in March.

Flyers for this year's 4th and 5th grade theatre production will be sent home with those students in the next few weeks. Instead of a play, this year we will be putting on a talent show. Whether it's a favorite song they sing around the house, a poem they've written, or they dance or play a musical instrument or tell jokes – the sky is the limit. "Audition day" is TBD, but they should begin thinking about what they might like to perform. These can be solo acts or groups of friends.

Please plan to join us at our next PTA meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3rd at 7pm.

*The Simon Lake PTA would like to thank Miss Amy Pinto for her many years of support to our children and programs!
We will all miss her and wish her the best!*

Parent to Parent

Dear Parents,

This month we did not receive any responses to our question from last month. In order to keep the Parent to Parent forum going, we need to hear from you! Please consider participating in our question of the month so we can keep parent communication going. All it takes is a quick email to tell us what you think!

February's Question is in honor of last month's Junior Achievement Day:

**How do you foster a sense of community in your children?
Do you do anything to help out in your community?**

Please email a response by the end of February to kroy@milforded.org or dkoosa@milforded.org. Remember, you can ask that your suggestion remain anonymous, signed simply as "from the parent of a 3rd grader."

From the Mind of Marchetti

Here are some of my HELPFUL, SUBTLE HINTS for both the adults and children of Simon Lake Elementary School...

Please remember to stay ACTIVE during these cold winter months and take advantage of the fun and benefits of snow while we still have it:

- lifting shovels of it (correctly) will train your cardio-vascular respiratory, muscular, and circulatory systems;
- sledding, snowboarding and skiing are obvious, but also try hiking or football (soccer's kind of difficult);
- and of course, building igloos and snow people are also some great aerobic activities.



Remember though, around school, there is no throwing snow at all.

Avoid overeating this winter (and always) by consuming smaller portions of a meal or try spacing your meals at least 4 hours apart. This will allow you to digest your food properly and maintain steady (SAFE) eating habits.

Feeling a bit 'under-the-weather' and stuffed up? Crack the window or door open for about a minute to inhale/exhale some of the FRESH air.

And last but not least, please remember that based on Milford Public School Policies, students **must** wear sneakers to participate in regular, weekly, Physical Education class. If your child is not in 5th grade, he/she only has Physical Education ONCE A WEEK. So if your child will wear their snow boots to school, please remember to toss a pair of sneakers for P. E. in a separate bag into their backpack.



**From your Physical Educator
with a positive attitude,**

Mr. Marchetti

Student Work

Super Great Wedding By Kenny, grade 2

My Mom got married. I was in the wedding. I had to wear a vest, tie, and fancy shoes. I got embarrassed A LOT! The wedding was at a fancy house. There was even a waterfall. It cost a lot of money. There were at least sixty flowers.

At the beginning, I was dancing for everyone. They were impressed. Then the embarrassing part came. I had to dance with Abigail, my cousin. My favorite job was to eat cookies and I loved the drink called the Shirley Temple with a cherry. Then I played tag with Shane, my cousin. The wedding was fun, but the best was when I could be wild!

Guest Artist: Prismatic Magic Laser Spectacular

On January 13, Simon Lake students and faculty were treated to a fun and educational laser light show by a group called Prismatic Magic. Their program was called "Laser Reader" and used lights, music and science to discuss the idea of reading being about using one's imagination and experiences to unlock and understand the adventure, characters, and ideas that the writer wants to share with us. Among other facts the students learned from Laser Science Teacher Jamie, was that LASER is not a word but is actually an acronym for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation." You can find out more about this group on their website www.prismaticmagic.com.



The next PTA-sponsored cultural arts program will be held on February 3 when musicians from the New Haven Symphony Orchestra visit the school to present their program called "Rhythm Around The World."



Protecting Your Child from Injury Due to Cold Weather:

Exposure to cold can cause injury or serious illness such as frostbite or hypothermia. The likelihood of injury or illness depends on several factors including temperature, wind, humidity, physical activity, clothing, working and living conditions, and a person's age and state of health. The air temperature does not have to be below freezing for someone to experience cold emergencies such as hypothermia and frostbite. Wind speed can create dangerously cold conditions even when the temperature is not that low. Below are some tips for outdoor safety during cold weather events.

If you have to go outside...

- If possible, avoid being outside in the coldest part of the day, or for extended periods of time in extreme cold weather.
- Take frequent breaks in a warm place and stay hydrated.

Dress appropriately and stay dry. Appropriate amounts and types of clothing are the most important method of providing protection from cold-related injury. Adults and children should wear:

- A hat—most of your body heat is lost through your head.
- A scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth
- Sleeves that are snug at the wrist
- Mittens—they provide more warmth than gloves.
- Water-resistant coat and boots.
- Several layers of loose-fitting clothing—Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body heat loss caused by wind. Wool, silk, or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton.
- Stay dry—wet clothing chills the body rapidly.
- Get out of wet clothes immediately and warm the core body temperature with a blanket or warm fluids like hot cider or soup.
- Whenever you feel too warm, remove extra layers of clothing in order to prevent excess perspiration, which increases heat loss.



Recognize the symptoms of frostbite. Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures. Seek medical attention immediately if you recognize any of the following symptoms:

- Gray, white, or yellow skin discoloration
- Numbness
- Waxy feeling skin

Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia. When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Seek medical attention immediately if you recognize any of the following symptoms:

- Shivering, exhaustion
- Confusion, fumbling hands
- Memory loss, slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Bright red, cold skin (infants)
- Very low energy (infants)