



Monthly Parent's Bulletin

January/February 2010 • Issue III

UPCOMING EVENTS

Calendar

January 2010

Fri., January 8
Close of Term 2

Tues., January 12
Interview Day

Wed. – Fri., Jan. 13 – 15
Applications Week

Fri., January 15
MLK Shabbat Service
Temple Israel
Attendance Required
5pm

Sat., January 16
No School

Mon., January 18
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
No School

Mon., January 18
Boston Children's Chorus
Jordan Hall
6:30pm
Attendance Required

Mon., January 25
Interview Day

Thurs., January 28
B.A.P.A. Meeting
All Parents Invited
Location tbd
6pm

Fri., January 29
Open House
8:30-10am

February 2010

Sat., February 6
SSAT- 8:30 AM

Fri., February 12
Interim Grades Close

Director of Studies

As students complete an intense stretch of work taking exams and polishing off secondary school applications, **this is not the time to take more than a brief break from focused study!** Certainly parents and advisors will want to **praise students for all the hard work done these past weeks.** This is also the right time to remind students that they are in the study business for years to come – and certainly for the **upcoming six months.**

For many students, the reflection required as they apply to high school stimulates a step up in maturity. They have written about their **goals for themselves**, and they should be able to imagine themselves as high school students. Working off their growth thus far, their teachers are imploring them to **study intensely in coming weeks.**

Here are several reasons why.

In the short term, **if there is a close call in admitting a student**, and certainly for students placed on waiting lists, secondary schools will want to know how students are doing through winter and spring weeks. **These grades really matter.**

And in the long term, **the students** who succeed in high school and college **are those who simply keep on studying**, night by night, no matter what time of year it is, no matter what is going on in their social lives, no matter what distractions there may be. Their daily habits and their love of learning are so strong that they power through their studies.

This is exactly the right time to help students take their learning to another level of satisfaction and success. Their Beacon advisors and teachers are eager to assist them, and **your encouragement makes ALL the difference.**

Patty Hager
Phager4@gmail.com

English

Beacon students continue to do strong work in English class. Considered as a group, they are **focused, alert, and curious.** They're working steadily to master the elements of the course, absorbing new words, ideas, and approaches as the weeks go by.

In November and December, they:

- Finished To Kill a Mockingbird, then talked in depth about and wrote about the book.
- Kept trying to improve their **reading techniques.** The students are trying to integrate a number of strategies that will help them to **read faster** and with **better comprehension.** For example, they are aiming to expand their "fixations" (they can explain all of this to you!) and **to read without talking to themselves**, and, at the same time, they're trying **NOT** to regress or to read the margins.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sat., February 13
No School

Mon. & Tues., Feb. 15 & 16
Long Winter Weekend
No School

March 2010

Thurs., March 4
B.A.P.A. Meeting
location tbd
6pm

Sat., March 6
SSAT – 8:30 AM

Tues., March 9
Parents Workshop
Temple Israel
6:30-8:00pm

Tues., March 10
Admissions Decisions Day

Fri., March 12
Close of Term 3

Sat., March 13
Spring Vacation Begins

Mon., March 29
School Resumes

English continued

- Studied a lot of **grammar** – verbals and phrases, in particular. Ask them to give you an example of a gerund phrase being used as the object of a preposition.
- Took two more by-weekly comprehensive tests.
- Kept accumulating **new vocabulary words**: they now have encountered about 620 new words. The students would be happy to tell you the meaning of “**inscrutable**”, “**culmination**”, and “**Motown**”; why Malcolm Gladwell and Michael Moschen are famous; and where Rosetta and Copenhagen are.

They have also just taken their midyear examination. That was a tough, two-hour exam covering everything we have done this year: reading, grammar, vocabulary, study skills – and including a complex essay question. **During the exam the students were focused, persistent, and mature; some of them even elected to stay and write for an additional 15 minutes. I was truly proud of them. I thought, “Yes, these are Beacon kids!”**

Episode of Sparrows will be the next book they read along with Catcher in the Rye.

As always, please feel free to drop in to a class. You’re welcome, also, to call me at 617 524-3075 or to email me at dcfootnotes@gmail.com to discuss how your child is doing.

Best wishes,
Dean Conway

Math

We have started “Honors” and “Regular” Math Sections.

Now that mid-term exams are over, students have officially completed our “Pre-Algebra” course. This means that since September, **they’ve already completed the equivalent of one full year of public school math!**

As the third quarter begins, we’re switching over to the “Algebra I” textbook. We’re also moving to **two separate sections** of mathematics: an “**Honors**” section and a “**Regular**” section.

Both sections will cover challenging material. The primary difference is that the Honors section will move faster, while the Regular section will move at a more moderate speed. Both sections will prepare students for a rigorous high-school math sequence. In fact, **many of the students from last year’s Regular class have accelerated into Honors classes as freshmen.**

This is possible because **the split provides major benefits to both groups.** At a more moderate pace, students in the Regular class gain deep mastery of challenging material. They also have an opportunity to become intellectual leaders – instead of feeling rushed, they can ask important questions, develop their own problem-solving methods, and put ideas into their own words.

Meanwhile, the accelerated pace of the Honors class forces students to work more independently and to draw their own conclusions and connections from each new topic. Members of Beacon’s Class of 2009 report that both sections prepared them to thrive as freshmen.

Finally, you might be wondering: **how are students being sorted into the two sections?** Section placement is still flexible, and it’s based on a *wealth* of data that I’ve been collecting about each student. **If you have ideas or questions about your child’s section placement, I would be happy to speak with you. I love to hear from parents who I don’t routinely hear from!** You can reach me at 617-785-0905, or at mdunkel@beaconacademy.org

Warm wishes,
Matt Dunkel

B.A.P.A Meetings

Please come to any and all meetings. Your participation is important!

Thurs., January 28th

Mentor-Mentee Get Together
Longwood Area. Location tbd
6pm

Thurs., March 4th

College Admissions Process
Location tbd
6pm
All are welcome

Thurs., April 8th

Summer Enrichment Opportunities
Current Students are required to participate in a 2nd summer**
Location tbd
6pm

Thurs., May 6th

African American Studies Seminar
Led by Beacon Parent, Simmons Professor Janie Ward
All are welcome to see how a seminar works.

* Dates are set. If other needs arise among the parents, we are flexible and may change topics but NOT the dates!

**If you have plans already lined up, please let Laura Coleman know either via e-mail lbcoleman_99@yahoo.com or cell 617-320-8412

Facing History And Ourselves (FHAO)

In January, we have been presented with a special opportunity to work with our hosts at Temple Israel. Through our unique partnership with Rabbi Stephanie Kolin and Uri Feinberg, the Beacon Academy students will work with some of the Temple's Monday Night School students to prepare a joint presentation for the January 15th Shabbat service; this service will honor the life and work of **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** and historically brings in a full house of Temple Israel members as well. Beacon Academy parents are invited to attend the service in a continuation of a tradition of cooperation that was established at last year's **MLK Shabbat**.

As students to confront the terrible human atrocities of the Holocaust, and other historical case studies, they explore the meaning of concepts such as **guilt, responsibility, and judgment**—and what those concepts mean in our world today. Students also continue to discover that **one way of taking responsibility for the past is to preserve its memory**. They explore the importance of monuments and memorials as communal gestures of remembering, of acknowledging injustice, and of honoring individuals and groups who have suffered.

Mervan Osborne, mosborne@beaconacademy.org

Secondary School Process

Beacon Academy students have, collectively, completed close to one hundred official secondary school visits and will complete the interviewing process this month. Mrs. Farkas will continue to keep our families informed and to supervise the remaining interviewing schedule. Standardized testing is largely (and thankfully) over for Beacon Academy students, just a few students may be advised to sit for one more flex SSAT in February.

Application work at school will resume after exams until the end of January. Schools either have an application due date of January 15 or February 1st.

A FEW REMINDERS:

***Financial aid forms should all be filed with SSS (call Mervan or Lora immediately if not complete. There are extremely important.)**

-Parents need to submit 2009 tax information to SSS as soon as it becomes available (do not wait until April 15).

-Students applying to Catholic schools must submit Facts form (www.factstuitionaid.com). We started the online accounts at school. Please make sure the information is submitted right away.

***Transcripts from 7th and 8th grade** (including final 8th grade transcript) must be at Beacon by as soon as possible to be included with required school records sent to secondary schools.

***Parent statements are required by many schools.** Please check in with your coach if you are unsure of how to approach the writing of a parent statement. These forms are due at the same time as the student application.

I know we can count on our parents to continue to support their students during this challenging time.

Mervan F. Osborne
617.653.7569

Lora Farkas
lfarkas@beaconacademy.org

B.A.P.A

Volunteering through Beacon Academy Parents Association is a great way to meet other parents, support your children and contribute to the school in a significant way. There are Parents Associations in most every secondary high school and you are encouraged to get involved. **B.A.P.A is a great training ground for ongoing participation in your child's education.**

Alumni parents (your B.A.P.A. mentors) continue to come to B.A.P.A. meetings because it's a way to stay connected to other parents and with Beacon, to receive and provide great advice and support to one another, and to hear what's going on in other secondary high schools.



Community Service Learning/Civic Action

In early February, we will begin a unit on **advocacy**. Each student will identify a **cause or issue of social change** to embrace and support for his/her advocacy presentation. The topics may range from local issues like safe playgrounds to national/international ones such as global warming and the promotion of renewable energy sources. After doing research on their topics, students will write a draft of the material they will present orally. By the end of the month, we will publish a schedule of the **student presentations, and parents are welcome to attend.**

Our reading partnership with the temple's preschoolers continues on Tuesdays and Thursdays during lunchtime. It is very important to remember to **PACK A LUNCH ON BOTH TUESDAY AND THURSDAY EACH WEEK.**

Sally Baker
Director of Community Service Learning

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14 months that lasts a life time