



Monthly Parents' Bulletin

March/April 2010 • Issue IV

UPCOMING EVENTS March-April Events

March 2010

Thurs., March 4
BAPA Meeting –
Patrick Day
Temple Israel
6-8pm

Tues., March 9
Secondary Schools Workshop
Temple Israel
6:30-7:30pm
Bring 2009 Taxes

Tues., March 10
Admissions Decisions Day

Fri., March 12
Close of Term 3

Sat., March 13
Spring Vacation Begins

Mon., March 29
School Resumes

April 2010

Thurs., April 8
BAPA Meeting
6:00-8:00pm
Temple Israel

Sat., April 10
Admissions Replies Due

Sat., April 17
SSAT – 8:30 AM

Sat., April 17
No School

Mon., April 19
Patriots Day
No School

Fri., April 30
Interim Grades Close

Sunday, May 2
Annual Fundraiser
Rialto Restaurant
6:00-9:00pm

Director of Studies

Spring Term

Teachers are planning a significant shift in the Beacon program for our Spring Term, beginning Monday, April 5 through Friday, May 14. For six weeks, we will add two classes (**Science and Research Project**) to the ongoing core classes (Facing History and Ourselves, English, and Mathematics) and intensify the pace of the academic program. **Our students will be asked to manage five classes, a more complicated weekly schedule, with more independence.**

Why change things just as the year is nearing completion? **We hope to accomplish four goals:**

1. Realizing that some Beacon graduates have been under-prepared for freshman **science** classes, we are incorporating an introduction to science during Spring Term. **Mr. Max Hall**, who has taught physics, environmental science, and computer studies in several independent schools, most recently at Concord Academy, will teach Beacon science classes during Spring Term, introducing students to the challenges they will meet next year in their secondary schools.
2. **Ms. Joanne Hoffman**, former Head of Moses Brown School and a master teacher, will teach a class that includes a research project. The goal is to be sure that Beacon students learn **the basics of good research**, including accessing reliable information and acknowledging sources.
3. Asking students to manage a more complicated weekly program will give them experience with the demands of the schedules they will face next year. We will work closely with students to develop their **study skills** to the point that they can succeed with more and different classes.
4. Once students have received their acceptances from secondary schools, there is a natural tendency for them to relax a bit in their studies. But in fact their work at Beacon is peaking. The skills they learn in the next weeks are the most important of all. **We hope that a change in the pace will kick the students into high gear during this stretch.**

Among Beacon's greatest strengths is the school's ability to be both secure and nimble in its program, gathering wonderful resources to improve the opportunities for our students. We are prepared for some stumbles as our students meet Spring Term, but **we look forward to witnessing their success in an environment much more like high school.**

Patty Hager
Director of Studies

English

Beacon students have had a productive couple of months since the midyear examinations and the end of the second term. They continue to apply themselves responsibly and eagerly as they grapple with difficult concepts, read, write, learn new words, and refine their study skills.

- ◆ Read the novel An Episode of Sparrows. This wonderful book is about life in post World War II London, its challenges and struggles and the dreams of several of the book's characters. Great style, nice twists and turns, and plenty of astute observations about human nature.
- ◆ Studied more grammar. A sound grasp of the principles of grammar will help the students when they pursue foreign languages in high school – and every time they write. It's important to know how language works.
- ◆ Spent a week studying the evolution of English – how people compressed elements of Latin, Greek, and Germanic words and expressions and developed the dynamic, supple language that we use today. We talked about the ancient Celts, Caesar, the Saxons and Vikings, William the Conqueror and Geoffrey Chaucer; and we looked at maps of Wessex (West Saxonia) and East Anglia.
- ◆ Kept learning new words: the students now have about 700 words in their notebooks. Ask them about flotsam and jetsam, dubious, Jeff Beck, and Sidney Crosby – and why they sometimes feel like Sisyphus.
- ◆ Took three more bi-weekly comprehensive tests. These tests cover the English curriculum and the various extracurricular offerings – like morning meetings – around school: we want the students to be open-minded and alert, receptive to and engaged with everything that happens here. The last couple of tests have included questions about grammar, geography, Malcolm Gladwell, nutrition (thanks to Matt Dunkel's wife Jen Obadia's stimulating presentations), Wayne Gretzky, Haruki Murakami, and famous wolverine named M3.

The door to class is always open: please come in any time. And you're welcome, of course, to call me at 617 524-3075 or email me at dcfootnotes@gmail.com to discuss how your child is doing.

Best wishes, Dean Conway

Community Service Learning/Advocacy

By the start of March vacation, each student will have written a draft of his/her **advocacy project**. **This year the causes range from concern for teenage drug abuse to finding ways to address the problem of obesity in the United States.** Some students will be ready to make their presentations before the break while others may be scheduled for the first week after vacation. In either case, students always practice before they advocate in front of the class. In the past few weeks, we have reviewed the guidelines for public speaking: maintaining good posture, minimizing the use of filler words such as "um" and "like," projecting one's voice, making eye contact with the audience, citing source material properly, and preparing for questions. Students will be graded on their presentations. **You all are welcome to come hear any or all of the presentations. Please check with Mrs. Baker for the presentation dates.**

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

Secondary Schools

**PARENT MEETING – TUESDAY, MARCH 9TH, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM, TEMPLE ISRAEL
“DECISION TIME: UNDERSTANDING SECONDARY SCHOOL OPTIONS”**



(This meeting is mandatory for Beacon Academy parents.)

PLEASE BRING YOUR 2009 TAXES WITH YOU SO YOU CAN MAIL THEM IN.)

A few points for parents as we complete the application process:

- Independent schools mail their decisions to arrive after March 10th.
- Letters will generally say the school will “accept”, “deny”, or “wait list” the applicant.
- Financial aid decisions are sometimes made separately. (For example, a student could be accepted academically, but placed on a wait list for financial aid).
- It’s not over ‘till it’s over. Financial aid and wait list decisions can take awhile to sort out. We will stay in touch with schools until every student has a good school option, with financial aid, for September 2010.
- Throughout the spring we will continue to address the important social and academic transition challenges the students will face as they move on to secondary schools.

What families need to do now:

- Send in your child’s school correspondence (letters and email messages). We will make a copy and send home the original. We need to track each student’s status with every school.
- **One last reminder about financial aid – make sure your online PFS includes all of your child’s schools and be sure to mail 2009 tax documents to: SSS By NAIS(, P.O. Box 449(, Randolph, MA 02368.**
- Remind your child of the importance of finishing strong at Beacon. We are about to embark on the expanded curriculum of Spring Term. The academic demands on the students will *increase* during the spring to better prepare them for their studies in rigorous secondary schools. This is not a time to relax – no “senioritis” allowed.

The next month can be an exhilarating time and an unsettling time for the students as they hear from the schools. Some will be elated and some will face disappointment, at least initially. We ask you to help them keep the school news in perspective and support each other as their friends hear from schools. This is a theme we will keep coming back to this spring. Please be in touch with us if you have any questions.

Mervan F. Osborne
Director of Admission, Placement
and Financial Aid

Lora Farkas
Director of Coaching and
Placement Associate

Facing History & Ourselves

The Facing History class has moved into its second major unit of the year which will culminate in an examination of the **Little Rock Nine** and the integration of the public school system in the United States. The focus in March will be on the development of, challenges to and ultimate demise of the U.S. slavery-based economy. Considerable attention is paid to the **13th (slavery abolished), 14th (citizenship rights) and 15th (right to vote regardless of race) Amendments to the Constitution** and the emergence of the Post-Reconstruction **Jim Crow System**. The class will discuss the importance of the **Brown vs. Board of Education Case**, the steps taken in Little Rock to comply with this landmark case and the considerable resistance to compliance. We will look at archival footage as well as selections from films that **include “Roots”, “Amistad”, “Amazing Grace”, “Unforgivable Blackness” and “Mississippi Burning”**.

In April, the class will move into a unit on the **Rwandan Genocide** of the mid-1990’s. The material is extremely challenging, as students will not only read and view first-hand accounts of the atrocities committed, but will also meet a Rwandan genocide survivor. This unit will take up most of the spring term schedule and has a significant amount of writing. In May, the students will spend the final weeks of the course reflecting on the historical connections between seemingly disparate course topics. They will be asked to produce a culminating group project which will require research, technological understanding and skills and teamwork.

Mervan Osborne



B.A.P.A. UPDATE - (Beacon Academy Parents Association)

We had a tremendous meeting in February, with over 40 Beacon parents attending (current and alumni). WOW! Benadette Manning (Phoebe '07 and Arena '08), outgoing Co-Chair, welcomed everyone. She led a discussion about the importance of prompt annual filing of SSS documents for financial aid. (See Secondary Schools write-up in this month's Bulletin.) Beacon will offer a financial aid workshop, probably in November next year; all parents who feel they could use our assistance should attend. We promise to make sure that everyone knows about this meeting. Charlene Baxter (Elizabeth '07) shared a horrifying story that showed how precarious financial aid moneys can be from year to year, especially when forms are not completed on time.

We will have four new BAPA Co-Chairs for 2010-2011. They are Linda Palmer (Kai '07), Angela Singelton-Scott (Joseph '08, Matthew '10), Leon Welch (Omari '08) and Estela Matta (Cristina '07, Laura '09). Benadette Manning and Janie Ward will still be volunteering their time but in a more focused way. Benadette is definitely interested in helping families file financial aid forms on time. This is a huge help and thank you Benadette!

To conclude, Arlene Spence, Beacon Academy Board Member, asked the parents to support a Beacon scholarship of \$25,000 by contributing at least \$200 each. The parents shared stories about what Beacon has meant for their children who are now well on their way through terrific high schools. The group brainstormed ways to raise the money such as asking co-workers, neighbors, and church congregations.

Our next meetings are Thursday, April 8th and Thursday, May 6th. We will always have a warm supper since we know that you all put in a hard day of work.

Please keep coming. We LOVE to see you and the support you show for one another and for Beacon!

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14 months that lasts a life time