



Monthly Parent's Bulletin

April/May 2009 • Issue VIII

- **April/May 2009**
Wed, April 8
Rowing starts
- **Fri., April 10**
Admissions Replies
Due
- **Wed., April 15**
Judge Houston
Luncheon Speaker
- **Fri., April 17**
Open House
- **Sat., April 18**
SSAT - 8:30 AM
- **Sat., April 18**
No School
- **Mon., April 20**
Patriots Day
No School
- **Wed., April 22**
Don Giovanni
Boston Lyric Opera
Evening performance
Attendance required
- **Tues., April 28**
Swimming
1:30-2:00 (6 wks)
Charles River Aquatics
- **May 2009 , Fri., May 1**
Interim Grades Close

The Class of 2010 is filling up quickly. Alumni have referred some of our best students. There is a link right on our Beacon homepage where inquiries will be sent directly to Mr. Osborne. Please share this information with strong, prospective students.

Mervan Osborne, Admissions Director
cinemaze@mac.com • 617-653-7569

Director of Studies

May Term

With Cindy Laba's encouragement, teachers at Beacon are enthusiastically planning a shift in our program for five weeks, from April 22 through May 22. During this term, we will add science, shift the schedule of classes and study halls, and incorporate new opportunities for students to engage in community service, swimming, and rowing on the Charles River.

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

1. Realizing that some Beacon graduates have felt underprepared for freshman science classes, we are incorporating an **introduction to science** during May Term. Mr. Max Hall, who has taught physics, environmental science, and computer studies in several independent schools, most recently at Concord Academy, will teach three science classes a week during May Term. In a very generous move, Beaver County Day School has offered Beacon Academy use of their state-of-the-art laboratories. So our students will receive instruction in scientific habits of mind and in laboratory work.
2. Asking students to manage a more complicated weekly schedule will give them experience with the demands of the schedules they will face next year. We will work closely with students on **developing their study skills** to the point that they can succeed with more and different classes.
3. 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 them into high gear* during this stretch.
4. The new term will allow time for work on the **transition to secondary schools**. We will focus on topics such as how students intend to introduce themselves in their new schools, choosing courses for next year, and working through case studies about the kinds of dilemmas they may face.

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. Please let us know what you think as May Term unfolds.

Patty Hager

Reading for Parents

New Boy

by Julian Houston

Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

Grapes of Wrath movie

(1940) with Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, John Carradine, and Charley Grapewin

Books I'm reading about Adolescents

Bodies

by Susie Orbach

The Good Teen

by Richard Lerner
(Tufts Professor)

Generation Text

by Dr. Michael Ost

Emotional Intelligence:

10th Anniversary

Edition: Why It Can

Matter More Than IQ

by Daniel Goleman

Community Service Learning/Civic Action

Before March vacation, students identified the "issue" or "cause" that they plan to support for their **advocacy presentation**. The topics range from *gun control* especially with regard to street violence, to *global warming* and the promotion of *renewable energy* sources.

In April, the students will research their topics and write a **draft** of the material they will present orally. I always like the students to show me a draft before they turn in their final papers. The best writers go through **multiple drafts** before the final (as will many of their peers next year so it is a good habit to get into now. Feel free to ask your son or daughter if they did a draft or are they turning in their first attempt at writing the paper.) **A schedule of their Morning Meeting oral presentations will be distributed at the end of the month, and parents are more than welcome to attend.** *We'd love to have you!*

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. Hopefully, we'll have 100% participation by the end of the year!**

Sally Baker

Math update

As Ms. Hager discussed above, we'll be moving to a new "May Term" schedule this month. The goal of May Term is to prepare students even more fully for high school, and I'm excited about what this will mean for the Math program.

During May Term, the revised schedule will allow us to split into two different math sections: *Honors Algebra I* and *Standard Algebra I*.

The Honors section will move at a fast pace, and it will prepare students for an Honors Geometry or Algebra II course in 9th grade. The Standard section will move at a more moderate pace, and it will prepare students for a Geometry or Algebra I course in 9th grade.

Based on their performance this year (and on what level of math they expect to take next year), students will be assigned to the course that is most appropriate for them.

Students should come to me with ideas and questions about their course placement. Once I have heard from each student (and from the rest of the Beacon staff), I will then make final decisions about who should be in each section. Parents are also encouraged to share their suggestions or feedback. Please get in touch with me by phone (617)785-0905 or by e-mail (mdunkel@beaconacademy.org).

Beacon Academy has always provided a highly personalized education, and I'm excited about this chance to tailor our math curriculum even more precisely to each student's individual strengths and learning styles. May Term will be a real challenge for our kids, and these math sections will allow us to provide the right kinds of challenges for each and every student.

Matt Dunkel

Beacon's Spring Celebration

On Sunday, April 5th, Beacon held its 3rd annual Spring Celebration at Rialto restaurant in Cambridge. Over 200 Beacon donors, supporters, B.A.P.A. parents, volunteers and Class of 2009 students attended what was once again a wonderful, inspirational evening.

Your sons and daughters did extremely well and were seated with guests whom they had never met before. The table conversations ranged from a science experiment discussion on how to make your own beer to books they have enjoyed reading in English, concerns about high school and many more topics. They held their own in the conversations.

The dinner consisted of a first course of a salad with a handmade mozzarella and asparagus, chicken or salmon for the main course and a chocolate tart for dessert. All the kids tried everything so if your son or daughter tells you that he/she doesn't eat these foods, they do now! (Look out for the Nutrition article from Mr. Dunkel's wife in next month's Parent's Bulletin.)

Beacon has only one annual fundraiser. Primarily all of Beacon's budget is raised through private donations and makes up the shortfall received from tuition. If you know anyone who would be interested in supporting Beacon financially, please introduce them to one of the faculty and staff. We'd love to show them around the school. In these economic times, it is an increasingly onerous task but we are committed to our Vision.

Beacon's Vision Statement:

One day, all children will enter high school prepared to achieve their social and academic potential, and through their determined efforts emerge as resourceful, excited and skillful learners eager to contribute to their own communities and the wider world.

We hope that even once your child graduates from Beacon, you will continue to stay involved with us. B.A.P.A (Beacon Academy Parents' Association) will only continue to grow and we hope will become a great resource and support group for you as your child progresses through high school and college.

We also need your support and encouragement with new Beacon families. We hope you will consider becoming a **Beacon host family** for new families (which you'll read more about next month.) We also hope you will consider attending Rialto and possibly sharing your child's high school experience and how Beacon helped to make it all possible. Ask your child about Joshua (founding class and now a junior at Chapel Hill Chauncy Hall with high honors) and Lorraine Smith's speeches at Rialto.

Mrs. Coleman, Director of Volunteers and Co-Curricular Learning

English

Here's the latest from the realm of English:

- As for literature, we've finished The Catcher in the Rye, the perpetually popular novel about one of the most famous fictional adolescents in history, and A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, the moving autobiography of a former American slave. Now we're reading The Grapes of Wrath, one of the most important American novels. I'm impressed day after day by the intelligent, perceptive comments that the students make about their readings: about the characters and themes, the authors' styles, and about their own reactions to the plot lines and events of the stories.
- We're continuing to study grammar, moving from parts of speech to phrases and soon to clauses.
- The students continue to expand and refine their vocabularies: they've now encountered about 1000 new words. More resourceful all the time, they're learning to be more precise about describing situations or people and discussing the books we're reading. Ask them about "manifesto", "Mardi Gras", "hubris", "Piccadilly", and "inculcate".
- For the rest of the year, we're going to focus on clear and accurate written expression: sharp sentences, well constructed paragraphs, thorough and patient essays; and first-rate notes from class and from homework assignments.

***Please feel free to visit a class any time – and to call me (617 524-3075)
or email me (dcfootnotes@gmail.com) to check on the progress of your child.
Best wishes, Dean Conway***

Facing History and Ourselves

During the month of April, the Facing History class will focus its attentions on the Choices curriculum. This unit begins with an examination of the era of Reconstruction that saw the enactment of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, the Plessy-Ferguson decision and the malignant growth of Jim Crow. We will then cover the series of developments that led to the seminal Brown vs. Board of Education case and the key players in that dramatic decision. Finally, using the FHAO Choices program of study, we will study the Little Rock Nine's role in integrating Arkansas' public schools.

Secondary School Process

The process of obtaining spots at secondary schools continues in April. While many of our students have received acceptances and substantial financial aid packages from high schools, there is still much work to be done to ensure that each member of the Beacon Academy class of 2009 lands in a great school next year. Most of our students will be attending revisiting days in the coming weeks and parents are encouraged to establish contact with admission and financial aid professionals at their children's schools. For those students still waiting for a resolution, patience and persistence are critical. Most schools require responses from accepted students by April 10 and when admission offices begin to get clear pictures of how many of these students will actually be accepting the offer of admission, places will invariably begin to become available. Schools will then begin to address their wait list candidates; the whole process takes time to resolve itself and we will not have absolute clarity until the end of the month. Generally, we are in a very good place and we hope to learn much more in the coming days.

Mervan Osborne, Director of Secondary School Placement



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14 months that lasts a life time