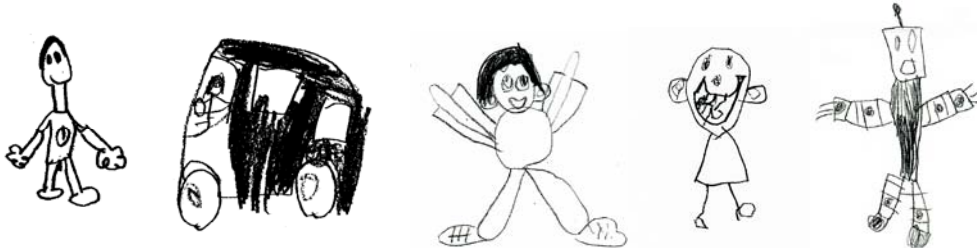
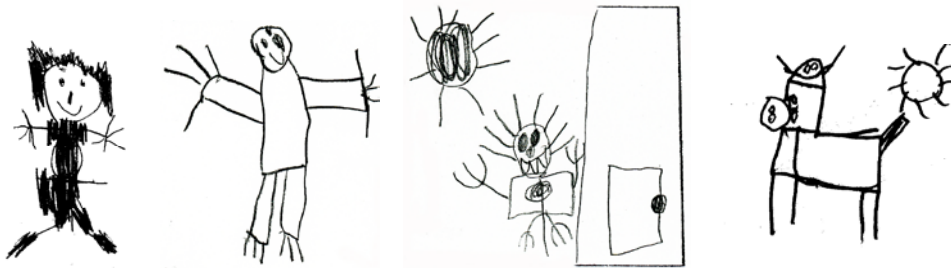
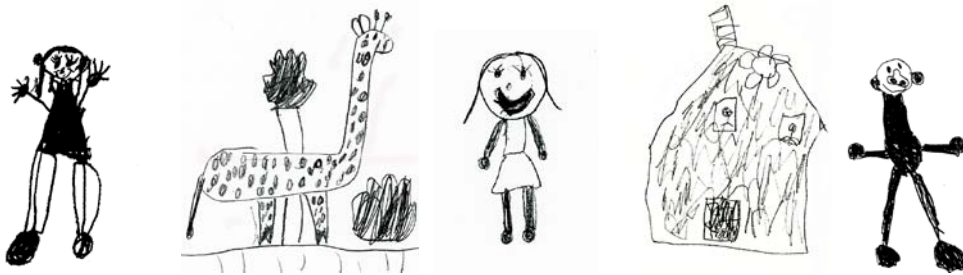




Welcome to Kindergarten 2011



Acton Public Schools

2011 Kindergarten Handbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Welcome Letter.....	p. 1
Kindergarten Registration Schedule.....	p. 2
Guidelines for School Visits	p. 3
What is Open Enrollment?.....	p. 4
Description of Lottery Procedures	p. 5
Optional All-Day Kindergarten/Form.....	p. 6
Transportation Information.....	p. 7-8
2011-12 School Calendar/Start Times	p. 9-10
Additional Information.....	p. 11-12

SECTION 2 An Introduction to the Acton Public Schools

p. 13-32

SECTION 3 An Introduction to Kindergarten.....

p. 33-36



ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ❖ ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

16 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720-2995 Phone: 978-264-4700 x3211 Fax: 978-264-3340 Email: smills@mail.ab.mec.edu

Stephen E. Mills, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

January 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We welcome you and your child to the Acton Public Schools. As teachers and administrators, our purpose is to provide a Kindergarten experience that will prove to be an excellent beginning for your child's school years.

This booklet was prepared as part of our Kindergarten orientation program. The purposes of this booklet are to help you through the registration process, to introduce you to the Acton Public Schools, and to help you to introduce your child to Kindergarten.

We start our relationship with the class of 2024 and their families in the winter of 2011 and are happy to answer any of your questions. We welcome your suggestions and your support, and look forward to working with you and your child in the fall.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Mills

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
2011-2012 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION SCHEDULE

The following are important dates for parents/guardians of children who will be entering Kindergarten in September 2011 (**5 years old on or before September 1, 2011**).

GENERAL MEETING*

Our Superintendent, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Director of Personnel, Director of Pupil Services, Principals, Registrar, Kindergarten staff and School Nurse will be on hand to answer questions.

Tuesday, January 11, 2011 at 7:00 p.m., R.J. Grey Junior High Auditorium
immediately followed at 8:15 by K-6 Before and After School Programs Overview

SCHOOL TOURS

All schools will be open for tours on the following dates: January 19; January 25, February 2, February 7. Please call individual schools after January 3, 2011 to reserve tour times. You may reserve more than one tour per day. If school is canceled or delayed on a tour day, parents should call to reschedule.

Tour hours for Conant, McCarthy-Towne & Merriam: 9:30 - 10:45 a.m. and 11:00 - 12:15 p.m.

Tour hours for Douglas & Gates: 8:45 - 10:00 a.m. and 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Please do not bring young children with you on the tour.

EARLY REGISTRATION for SIBLINGS and WALKERS

Families who are eligible, or who believe they may be eligible for priority admission status (siblings of current students, walkers), are urged to register early. Both sessions will be at the Central Office located in the R.J. Grey Junior High School

You must bring a copy of your child's birth certificate/passport, most recent physical examination & immunization record.

Tuesday, January 18: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon and 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 19: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

PARENT INFORMATION EVENING MEETINGS*

Tuesday, January 25, 7:00 p.m. @ Gates - Cafetorium

Tuesday, February 1, 7:00 p.m. @ Merriam - Cafetorium

Tuesday, February 8, 7:00 p.m. @ Douglas - Cafetorium

Tuesday, February 15, 7:00 p.m. @ McCarthy-Towne - Cafetorium

Tuesday, March 1, 7:00 p.m. @ Conant - Cafetorium

** In case of snow, ANY postponed evening meeting will be held the next evening (Wednesday)*

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

You must bring a copy of your child's birth certificate/passport, most recent physical examination & immunization record.

Both sessions will be at the Central Office located in the R.J. Grey Junior High School.

Tuesday, March 15: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon and 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

INFORMATION SESSION for K-6 BEFORE and AFTER SCHOOL CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

Tuesday, January 11, 2011 at 8:15 p.m., R.J. Grey Junior High School Auditorium

If you are interested in K-6 before and after school childcare programs, representatives from Community Education Extended

Day and school-based before and after school programs will be available to describe their programs, enrollment process, fee structure, etc. following the General Meeting that begins at 7:00 (see above).

REGISTRATION PROCESS for COMMUNITY ED EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM, K-6

Registration forms for new families will be accepted February 21 - March 4 by mail or walk-in. Lottery will be held on Monday, March 7, at 10:00 a.m. at the Community Education Office, Administration Building, 15 Charter Rd., Acton

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

Late April -School Placement & All-Day Kindergarten Lotteries held (as necessary). Notification letters sent out.

May 13 - All Day K non-refundable deposit (\$430) due.

May 31 - Parent-released/teacher-completed Pre-K Assessment Form due at Registrar's Office, R.J. Grey Junior High

July 5 - (*Approx. date*) Schools assign students to either AM or PM sessions and notify Transportation Office.

July 31 - Children's medical forms (complete immunization history, physical exam completed after 1/1/10) due at school nurse's office.

August 1 - September tuition for children registered in All-Day K (\$430) due at the Community Ed. Office. 11/3/10

Office of the Superintendent
Acton Public Schools
Acton, MA 01720

TO: Parents and Guardians Enrolling New Kindergartners
FROM: Steve Mills
ON: January 2011
RE: Guidelines for School Visits

=====

Although each school develops its own description of what a “typical visit” will be like, and “suggestions of what to look for,” they all agree that the following guidelines will make the visiting process more worthwhile for everyone involved.

- 1) Parents should call each school office to arrange for an appointment to visit.
(**Conant:** 978-266-2550; **Douglas:** 978-266-2560; **Gates:** 978-266-2570;
McCarthy-Towne: 978-264-3377; **Merriam:** 978-264-3371)
- 2) Tour sizes are limited. If particular times are important to you, please make your reservations early!
- 3) Visitors are asked to leave their children at home in order for the visitors to be able to move freely throughout the building and to engage actively in discussions with their guides.
- 4) Visitors are asked to observe this common set of “tour guidelines” in order not to interrupt the students’ and teachers’ important work of learning and teaching:
 - Speak in whispers or very soft voices.
 - Avoid questions and comments to teachers and students in the classrooms.
 - Refrain from touching things on students’ and teachers’ desks, display tables and counter tops.
 - Move about quietly.
 - **Turn off cell phone.**

Thank you!

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHAT IS OPEN ENROLLMENT?

The Acton Public School system has an "open enrollment" policy that allows some choice in selecting the school you would like your child to attend, providing that the school can accommodate the student.

The official School Committee policy on enrollment states:

The Acton Public School Committee strives to provide high standards of educational excellence in all its elementary schools. Since no single teaching method is best for all students, the Committee supports the use of a variety of teaching methods and techniques that will achieve the prescribed curriculum objectives. It follows that parents should have the opportunity to choose the school they think best fits the needs of their children subject to the availability of space and staff.

In the placement of students, the following guidelines will be utilized in appropriate situations.

1. PROVIDING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL PROGRAM NEEDS

Children requiring specialized programs will be placed in appropriate schools upon recommendation by the Pupil Services Department.

2. KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

It is important to build a strong corps of families who can devote their energies to their school's activities. Volunteerism, active parent/teacher organizations, and parent involvement in advisory groups and the like are valuable school resources. So is a family's long-term connection to a school community. Therefore, if the newly enrolling student has a sibling in the Acton or Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools and that sibling attended an Acton elementary school, the newly enrolling student will be given school selection preference at that same school.*

3. ENCOURAGING WALKING TO SCHOOL

Although we must bus the vast majority of Acton's children to our centrally located schools, we support the town's sidewalk building program and feel children should walk to school wherever possible. Since this approach offers economic advantages, walkers will be given preference to the school of their choice.

*A sibling is defined as: 'a relative (by birth, adoption or guardianship) who is living in the same home.'

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DESCRIPTION OF LOTTERY PROCEDURES

The Acton Public School Committee has an Open Enrollment Policy that allows parents some choice in selecting the Elementary school they would like their child to attend.

Priority is given to children who:

- Have or had a siblings enrolled in a particular school (the sibling must still enrolled in the school system K-12);
- Children who will walk to that school (commencing in grade one)
- Children with special needs or E.L.L. (English Language Learners) needs that can only be met in a particular school (as determined by the Pupil Services Department).
- Students who are retained in a grade

Once these priority admissions have been made, the district will confirm the number of remaining spaces in each school.

- If the number of families who wish admission to a school exceeds the number of available spaces, then the district will conduct a lottery where students are randomly selected to be put on to a waiting list.
- Once first choice preferences have been filled for each school, the district repeats the process for second choice schools, then third choice and so on, until all students have been placed at a school.
- Wait lists are established at each level for all students who do not receive admission to the school of their choice.

The Lottery process is designed to provide an equitable opportunity for all families who do not have priority admission to be enrolled in the school of their choice. All students are given an equal chance to be placed in a school of their choice. Ten current Elementary School parents who do not have incoming Kindergarteners are selected to observe and participate in the Lottery.

Once all students have been assigned to an Elementary School, the district reviews the request for All Day Kindergarten (ADK) admissions. If demand exceeds the number of seat available, an ADK Lottery is held to determine which families are enrolled in ADK. A wait list is established for all families who wish to enroll in ADK but are not selected during the Lottery.

Students who move in to Acton after the lottery has been held are enrolled in a school with available seats and added to the end of the waiting list based on their preferences list.

It is important to note that attention is always given to maintaining as close a class size balance between and within schools as possible.

Office of the Superintendent

Acton Public Schools
Acton, MA 01720

TO: Parents Enrolling New Kindergartners
FROM: Dr. Stephen Mills
ON: January 2011
RE: Optional All-Day Kindergarten (ADK) Program, 2011-12

=====

In order to be responsive to the educational and personal needs of the children and parents of the Acton community, the Acton Public Schools offer an **optional** All-Day Kindergarten program. This program is offered at all five elementary schools on a space-available basis (see "Acceptance" below). Tuition is charged for the hours beyond the regular Kindergarten day.

Purpose

The All-Day program provides an alternative to the more fragmented day experienced by many children in a half-day program. All Acton Kindergarten students learn the same curriculum. The difference in the All-Day program is one of pace, time and enrichment. The day is less rushed, and there is more time available to meet the social, emotional and developmental needs of the children enrolled. This is not a childcare program.

Length of School Day

For ADK students, for the entire school year, the length of the school day (including half day Thursdays) and the bus schedules are the same as those for students in grades 1-6. All-Day Kindergartners eat lunch at school.

Tuition Charge

The cost of having your child in the All-Day program for 2011-2012 will be \$4,300, payable in 10 equal monthly installments. **A one month, non-refundable deposit of \$430 will be due on May 13, 2011 to secure a placement in the All-Day program. This deposit will be applied to the final June 2012 payment.** The September payment will be due by August 1, 2011, subsequent payments will be due on the first of each following month. All tuition is payable to A-B Community Education. You will receive payment information in mid-July.

Limited tuition assistance is available. Eligibility and level of assistance are based on ability to pay. To inquire about tuition assistance, **once your child has been admitted to ADK**, please contact Teresa Gorman, Community Education, 978-266-2525.

Acceptance in All-Day Kindergarten

At Kindergarten registration you will be asked to indicate your interest in having your child participate in the All-Day program on your Kindergarten registration form. If interested in ADK, you will also be asked to turn in the form (see back of this page). Since demand has typically exceeded available openings, **after** all students have been assigned to one of the five elementary schools, the district conducts a separate ADK lottery to determine which families may enroll their children in the ADK program. Alternatively (this is unlikely), the program will not run at any given school if fewer than 18 families at that school elect to enroll their kindergartners.

Administration of All-Day Kindergarten

The staff and curriculum of the All-Day Kindergarten will be administered by each school in the same manner as all other Kindergartens. Tuition will be processed through the Community Education office (978-266-2525).

Transportation Information

School Committee policy states that transportation will be provided *“to and from school, with pick-up points at the nearest safe street location to the particular student’s home”*.

With that in mind the School Committee recognizes that parents of Kindergarten students may need to have their children transported to and from places other than home. Therefore, the district issues “Permanent Special Arrangement” bus passes to Kindergartners. **These passes will be issued only to Kindergartners who will be transported somewhere other than home on a regular weekly schedule.**

Early in May, after the school and All-Day Kindergarten lotteries, you will receive a placement letter informing you of where your child will attend school. Accompanying that letter, you will receive a Kindergarten Bus Transportation Needs Form. Please complete this form accurately to ensure the appropriate transportation schedule for your child. This form must be return within ten business days of receipt to the Transportation Office, Acton Public Schools, 16 Charter Rd., Acton, MA 01720.

If you find that you need to make changes in your child’s regular schedule after turning in your Transportation Needs Form, you can pick up a new form from any of the elementary school offices or from the Transportation Office. All changes must be made at least one week in advance and must be “Permanent” changes.

Bus Tags

Based on the information provided, the Transportation Department will create **Bus Tags** that will be sent home or distributed at your school's orientation. These Bus tags help the bus driver ensure that Kindergarten students are picked up and dropped off at the correct location. The bus tag should be secured to your child’s backpack for the entire year.

The information on the bus tag includes:

- your child's name, address, telephone number and day care (if applicable)
- what time your child is picked up (**students should be at their bus stop five (5) minutes prior to their scheduled pick-up time.**)
- the location of the bus stop (**students must be dropped off at an existing bus stop**)
- the bus number of the bus your child rides to school
- the bus number of the bus your child rides from school

In case of emergencies, and to prevent mix-ups, administrative assistants at each school retain up-to-date maps of Acton, as well as copies of all bus routes including bus numbers and bus stop locations.

Getting Off the Bus

Every school bus stops at two elementary school buildings (either Douglas and Gates, or Conant and the Parker Damon Building). On the first day of school, sometimes Kindergartners get confused and get off the bus at the wrong school. You can help to avoid tears on the first day by reminding your child of the name of his/her school, and by familiarizing your child with the exterior of his/her school -- especially the front of the school where the buses drop kids off.

Kindergarten students must be met at the bus stop by a responsible adult unless permission has been given for the child to get off the bus with older siblings, or unless it can be determined by the bus driver that the child can gain entrance to his/her home and that a parent or daycare provider is there to receive the child. Kindergarten students will be returned to their school of attendance if it appears they would otherwise be left unattended.

One-Day Special Arrangement Bus Passes for students in grade 1-6

Upon parent/guardian request, school offices will issue students in grades 1 through 6 "One-Day Special Arrangement Bus Passes." These passes allow children to join their friends for "play dates," or to attend irregularly-scheduled activities. **Kindergarten students will not be issued a one-day pass unless an emergency is determined by the school principal.** Forms for one-day bus passes are available in each elementary school office.

General Bus Information

Riding the school bus is a new experience for some children. It would be most helpful if you would talk to your child about the bus rides and make sure that he/she is feeling comfortable. If he/she does have some fears, talk it over with him/her and, if necessary, contact the Transportation Office. In the beginning of the year, it is helpful to have an older brother, sister, or neighbor child, sit with your child on the bus.

If your child is going to be absent, please notify the Transportation Office as soon as possible at 978-264-4700, x3228.

Information relative to bus numbers, bus routes, and bus stops can be obtained from the Transportation Office by calling 978-264-4700, x3228 during regular school hours. The elementary school offices, in consultation with the Transportation Office, reserve the right to deny the issuance of bus passes which are not filled out properly.

School Bus Lost and Found

If your child leaves an item on the school bus, it will be kept on the bus for a few weeks in anticipation of the child's claiming it. **Check with your child's bus driver first** to see if the item is still on the bus or if it was turned in to the school office. Anything left unclaimed on a school bus will eventually be put in the lost and found container in the bus drivers' room. The Transportation Office **does not** receive lost and found items. However, you may call as a last resort to try to locate an item. **Please remember to label all of your child's clothing and belongings to help return lost items!**

Acton Public Schools
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
SCHOOL CALENDAR, 2011-2012
Bold Underlined Dates = No School Days

APPROVED 12/2/10

Aug.	M	T	W	T	F
Sept.	29	30	31	1	<u>2</u>
	<u>5</u>	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	<u>29</u>	30

Teachers' mtg. – Aug 29
Schools Open – Aug 30
No School - Sept. 2
Labor Day - Sept. 5
HS Early Dismissal - Sept. 23
Rosh Hashanah – Sept 29
School Days - 21

Jan.	M	T	W	T	F
	<u>2</u>	3	4	5	6
	9	10	11	12	13
	<u>16</u>	17	18	19	20
	23	24	25	26	27
	30	31			

Schools Open - Jan. 3
Jr. High Early Dis. - Jan. 5
Martin Luther King Day - Jan. 16
Kindergarten Change-over - Jan. 23
School Days - 20

Oct.	M	T	W	T	F
	3	4	5	6	7
	<u>10</u>	11	12	13	14
	17	18	19	20	21
	24	25	26	27	28
	31				

Yom Kippur – Sat., Oct 8
Columbus Day - Oct. 10
Elem Early Dismissal – Oct 26
School Days - 20

Feb.	M	T	W	T	F
			1	2	3
	6	7	8	9	10
	13	14	15	16	17
	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>
	27	28	29		

Presidents' Day - Feb. 20
Winter Recess - Feb. 20 -24
School Days - 16

Nov.	M	T	W	T	F
		<u>1</u>	2	3	4
	7	8	9	10	<u>11</u>
	14	15	16	17	18
	21	22	23	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>
	28	29	30		

Prof. Day - Nov. 1 (no school/students)
Elem Early Dismissal – Nov 2
Veterans Day - Nov. 11
Half Day - Nov. 23
Thanksgiving Recess - Nov. 24-25
School Days - 18

Mar.	M	T	W	T	F
				1	2
	5	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	29	30

HS Early Dismissal - March 15
School Days - 22

Dec.	M	T	W	T	F
				1	2
	5	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19	20	21	22	23
	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>

Jr. High. Early Dis. - Dec. 15 & 20
Winter Recess - Dec. 24 - Jan. 2
School Days - 17

Apr.	M	T	W	T	F
	2	3	4	5	<u>6</u>
	9	10	11	12	13
	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>
	23	24	25	26	27

Good Friday - April 6
Spring Recess - April 16 - 20
Patriots Day – April 16
School Days - 14

May	M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3	4
	7	8	9	10	11
	14	15	16	17	18
	21	22	23	24	25
	<u>28</u>	29	30	31	

Memorial Day - May 28
School Days - 22

June	M	T	W	T	F
					1
	4	5	6	7	8
	11	12	13	14	15
	18	19	20	21	22
	25	26	27	28	29

Graduation - June 1
Last day - June 14 - 21
(depending on snow days)
School Days - 10
Total Days = 180 - 185

No School and Delayed Opening Announcements air on: <http://ab.mec.edu>
TV Channels 4, 5, & 7 and radio stations WBZ, WEIM
Delayed Opening - delayed starting time.
NO SCHOOL SIGNALS: 2-2-2-2 6:30 AM - No School ABRSD, 7-12, ALL DAY;

2-2-2-2; 7:00 AM - No School ALL Schools ALL DAY;
1-1-1-1 7:15 AM - No School APS, K-6, ALL DAY

School Committee Meetings:
A-B Regional -1st Thursday, JHS Library - 7:30 PM;
APS Local - 3rd Thursday, JHS Library - 7:30 PM (exceptions: Oct.-Mar. @ Elem. Schools). Check postings as locations may change.

SCHOOLS OPEN

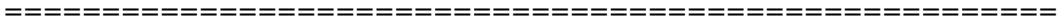
Tuesday, August 30, 2011*

* With the exception of
8th, 10th, 11th, & 12th graders, who start on Wednesday, August 31st

Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

HIGH SCHOOL 7:23 a.m. - 2:18 p.m.

JUNIOR HIGH 7:30 a.m. - 2:06 p.m.



Acton Public Schools

CONANT, McCARTHY-TOWNE, MERRIAM

8:30 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
(Thursdays - 12:15 p.m. dismissal)

Kindergarten

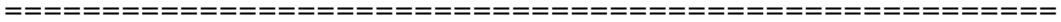
AM Session (M,T,W,F) - 8:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.
(Thursday schedule - 8:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.)
PM Session - 12 noon - 2:45 p.m.
(No PM session on Thursdays)

DOUGLAS & GATES

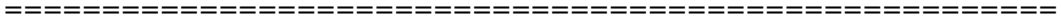
9:15 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
(Thursdays - 1:00 p.m. dismissal)

Kindergarten

AM Session (M,T,W,F) - 9:15 a.m. - 12 noon
(Thursday schedule - 9:15 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)
PM Session - 12:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
(No PM session on Thursdays)



Acton School Lunch Price: \$2.25
Acton-Boxborough School Lunch Price: \$2.00
Milk only: \$.50



*****Direct Phone Numbers*****

Conant: 978-266-2550 **Douglas:** 978-266-2560 **Gates:** 978-266-2570
All other schools: 978-264-4700

12/13/10

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance Policy

- Children reaching the age of five on or before September 1 are eligible and expected to be enrolled in Kindergarten in September of that calendar year.
- Children reaching the age of six on or before September 1 are eligible and must be enrolled in school in September of that calendar year.

Kindergarten Screening

As mandated by Federal and State Special Education Regulations, Acton Public Schools conducts a screening of all Kindergarten children early in the fall. The screening surveys a student's functioning in such areas as: vision and hearing, speech and language development, perceptual-motor development, memory and reasoning, and social development. A parent questionnaire is also an important component of the screening program as it provides information about the student's developmental background and parent observations.

In conducting the screening, Pupil Services staff meets with students individually to administer screening tasks. Students generally find screening in their familiar school environment a comfortable experience. Kindergarten teachers share their observations with Pupil Services staff in order to produce a more global picture of the student's functioning.

This screening is designed to identify those students who may need more intensive supports in language, readiness or motor areas in order to make effective progress. Additionally, this screening provides staff with information regarding particular students who may need further evaluation in order to make effective progress in school. An evaluation may indicate a finding of special needs and necessitate a specialized intervention plan to assure the student's educational progress.

Preschool Screening

Federal and State Special Education Laws contain regulations regarding preschool screening of children, ages 3-4. Parents may request a screening if they have concerns about their child's development.

For further information, please call Carol Huebner, Early Childhood Coordinator, at 978-264-4700, x3268.

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Special Education Law, contains regulations that include public screening of children, ages 3-4, whose parents/guardians request such a screening because they have concerns about their child's development.

Morning and Afternoon Sessions

Your child's Kindergarten year will be divided into two sessions. During half the year your child will attend Kindergarten during the afternoon or PM session. The PM session meets four days a week - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

The morning or AM session meets five days a week. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday are regular Kindergarten schedule days. On Thursday your child's schedule will be the same as that of other elementary children in his/her school. That schedule is normally one hour longer.

Sessions change at the mid-year (usually the last week of January). You will be notified of the date and time changes. You will also receive new bus instructions. Your child's teacher will remain the same throughout the year.

Communication with the School

Close communication between home and school is encouraged. The following information may prove helpful:

- **Appointments:** Please contact the school for an appointment, if you wish to speak with teachers, other staff or the principal. Parents are encouraged to contact the school directly when any problem, concern or question arises. Any questions concerning the child other than a routine matters or questions of school-wide policy should first be discussed with the teacher.
- **Tardiness:** Children who are tardy should inform the office of their arrival before going to their room.
- **Parent Notes:** When a parent sends a note to school, it is advisable to use an envelope. The child's full name, school and room number should be written on the outside of the envelope, and the child's full name should be included in any note if the child's last name is different from that of the parent.
- **Field Trips:** Field trips are an integral part of the Kindergarten program. Before each field trip, a form will be sent home for your signature. This permission slip must be signed and returned to the school.
- **Parent Conferences:** Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled during the late fall.
- **Calendar:** Please note that there are two conference days scheduled in the fall. These days are half-days for all students. At these times the parent is informed of the child's progress and activities. A parent may request a conference at any other time during the year.
- **Change:** Notify the school office and the Transportation Office whenever there is a change in address, telephone number or emergency number.

Day Care

If you will be transporting your child to day care at the end of the Kindergarten day, please be sure to **notify your child's day care on any day when your child will not attend.**

KINDERGARTEN HANDBOOK 2011

SECTION 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The following description of the Acton Public Schools was prepared jointly by the Acton elementary school principals. This document stresses the similarities among the schools, rather than the differences engendered by the policy of “open enrollment.”

Our schools are far more similar than they are different. The Acton elementary faculty, staff and administration hold the same values, priorities and objectives for all students. These are reflected in the philosophy of the Acton schools. A brief description of each individual school is included in this section.

The elementary principals work as a team to ensure that these values, priorities and objectives are addressed and fostered in all of the schools.

We are confident in assuring you that your child will receive the best education that our community can offer, regardless of the school that she/he attends.

We welcome you and your family to the Acton schools.

The Elementary School Principals

Damian Sugrue, Conant School

Christopher Whitbeck, Douglas School

Lynne Newman, Gates School

David Krane, McCarthy-Towne School

Ed Kaufman, Merriam School

I. GENERAL INFORMATION, 2011-2012

CONANT SCHOOL

Principal.....Damian Sugrue
Location.....80 Taylor Road
Telephone..... 978-266-2550
Telephone Attendance #..... 978-266-2555 (Select Option 8)
Year School Built..... 1971
Student Population (October 1, 2010)..... 500
Class Size Range (October 1, 2010)..... 20to 25 students
Number of Classroom Teachers..... 21

DOUGLAS SCHOOL

Principal.....Christopher Whitbeck
Location.....21 Elm Street
Telephone..... 978-266-2560
Telephone Attendance #..... 978-266-2566
Year School Built.....1966
Student Population (October 1, 2010).....489
Class Size Range (October 1, 2010)..... 19 to 25 students
Number of Classroom Teachers..... 21

GATES SCHOOL

Principal.....Lynne Newman
Location..... 75 Spruce Street
Telephone..... 978-266-2570
Telephone Attendance # 978-263-SICK
Year School Built..... 1968
Student Population (October 1, 2010)..... 490
Class Size Range (October 1, 2010)..... 20 to 26 students
Number of Classroom Teachers..... 21

McCARTHY-TOWNE SCHOOL

Principal.....David Krane
Location.....11-13 Charter Road
Telephone..... 978-264-3377
Telephone Attendance #..... 978-264-4098
Year School Built.....2002
Student Population (October 1, 2010)..... 489
Class Size Range (October 1, 2010)..... 19 to 25 students
Number of Classroom Teachers..... 21

MERRIAM SCHOOL

Principal.....Ed Kaufman
Location.....11-13 Charter Road
Telephone..... 978-264-3371
Telephone Attendance #..... 978-264-3373
Year School Built..... 2002
Student Population (October 1, 2010)..... 551
Class Size Range (October 1, 2010)..... 20 to 25 students
Number of Classroom Teachers..... 24

II. ALL SCHOOLS HAVE THE FOLLOWING PHYSICAL FACILITIES:

- Cafeteria/Cafetorium
- Counseling Office
- Gymnasium
- Health Room/Nurse's Office
- Library/Media Center
- Special Education Areas
- Teachers' Room
- Computer Lab

III. HOURS OF OPERATION (2011-12)

Conant, Merriam & McCarthy-Towne Schools

AM Kindergarten: 8:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

PM Kindergarten: 12 noon - 2:45 p.m.

Douglas & Gates Schools

AM Kindergarten: 9:15 a.m. - 12 noon

PM Kindergarten: 12:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Remember: Thursdays are half-days (no PM Kindergarten)

IV. THE ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The learning process begins at birth. Learning is as instinctive as breathing, eating and sleeping. Education, however, is more than learning. It is a conscious and organized effort to direct the learning process and to achieve specific goals. Education is a process that requires structure, planning, evaluation and cooperative effort. The process functions and achieves its aims through a joint commitment on the part of all concerned: schools, family and community.

The school is charged by the community with the major responsibility for organizing and carrying out the educational process. In order for the school to meet this responsibility, the community must provide intelligent direction, resources and continuous support. Individuals must recognize what the process offers them and accept responsibility in making that process work.

Education, then, is seen as the joint enterprise of the school, the community and the student which demands the active commitment and cooperation of each party to the whole.

Our schools have the responsibility to:

- Contribute to the learner's physical and emotional well-being, especially to a sense of personal worth and dignity, and to a capacity for influencing his/her own destiny.
- Develop in each learner the listening, speaking, reading, writing, visual and computational skills needed for perception, conceptualization, communication and evaluation of ideas.

- Develop in each learner the ability to reason logically and to use mathematical and scientific knowledge and methods to solve problems.
- Foster and stimulate in each learner the natural desire for lifelong learning and develop the thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, organizational and study skills necessary to fulfill that desire.
- Provide each learner with experience leading to discovery of new relationships, stimulation of imagination and personal reflection.
- Provide each learner with experience to gain knowledge and understanding of how society functions in theory and in practice.
- Foster individual commitment to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and to protect the rights of others.
- Provide each learner with guided experience that promotes cooperation and mutual respect.
- Develop each learner's capacity to adapt to changing conditions and to meet unexpected challenges, to take calculated risks.
- Increase knowledge of and respect for various world cultures and the interdependence of nations.
- Provide each learner with knowledge and experience that contribute to an understanding and appreciation of human similarities and differences.
- Provide each learner with experiences to gain knowledge and understanding of the biological world and people's responsibility to protect the environment from misuse.
- Provide each learner with varied opportunities to nurture interests, to discover and to develop natural talents and to express values and feelings through various media.
- Provide each learner with varied opportunities for expression through the arts and to appreciate the artistic expression of others.

- Develop in each learner an understanding of the uses of technology and its potential.
- Provide each learner with the skills, attitudes, experiences and counseling to pursue a career consistent with individual interests and capabilities.

V. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' CURRICULUM

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate activities for the young child. Teachers employ guidelines, activities and materials in the areas of communication, listening, verbal expression, developmental reading, handwriting, literature, exploration, mathematics, science, social studies and creative expression in art, music and motor skills. Keen attention is given to diagnostic screening and observation procedures for the early identification of disabilities.

GRADES ONE - SIX

English Language Arts

We are in an age of holistic views about learning and teaching, and of an emphasis on process as well as product. Nevertheless, the elementary Language Arts curriculum addresses a number of separate categories to emphasize those aspects of teaching and learning which we feel are critical to the development of literacy and verbal communication. These topics include:

1. Reading/Skills - Students learn to interpret meaning from text; through purposeful, critical and pleasurable uses of books, students will understand and read various types of material with increasing independence; students will become positive, eager, lifelong readers. Reading/"Book Talk" - Students learn to appreciate literature, and to offer and share insights about authors, about books, and about the elements that authors control in their work; students develop a critical vocabulary for talking about literature.

2. Language Awareness - Students deepen their understanding of linguistic forms and acquire common terms for referring to those forms, e.g. word patterns and rhymes, spelling rules and grammatical terms, parts of speech, connotations, word families and figurative language.
3. Writing/Skill and Content - Students learn to execute writing tasks, with the understanding that writing is an ongoing process; they regard themselves as writers; they become increasingly aware of the effect of their writing on others; they develop strategies for drafting and revising; they gain techniques and tools for writing and controlling the information they present.
4. Writing/Appearance and Correctness - Students learn to take care to present their readers with neat, legible text, and with correct use of language conventions and forms; they learn how to support the communication of their ideas by presenting their writing in appropriate forms.
5. Use of References - Students learn to recognize and use reference materials as tools for their own learning; they become oriented to the conventional ways of compiling, organizing and presenting reference information.
6. Participation - Students develop an awareness of themselves as speakers, listeners and collaborators; they understand and use language and discussion to carry out cooperative tasks; they become attentive, respectful and confident participants in classroom activities.

Mathematics

The elementary mathematics program helps students achieve mathematical literacy in our complex, "information" society. In addition to addressing traditional topics in mathematics, expectations also include:

- the ability to set up problems with the appropriate operations;
- knowledge of a variety of techniques to approach the work on problems;
- the ability to work with others on problems;

- the ability to see how mathematical ideas apply to common and complex problems;
- preparation for open problem situations, since many "real" problems are not clear or obvious;
- belief in the utility and value of mathematics.

Traditional topics that are addressed in the current mathematics curriculum include: numeration, number patterns, calculation, fractions and decimals, time and money, measurement and geometry, graphing and problem-solving. By using a variety of manipulative aids and real-life applications, students are provided with concrete, "hands-on" experience to enhance their understanding of underlying concepts. Decisions about calculation procedures in numerical problem-solving incorporate the use of calculators and computers, as well as estimation and paper/pencil techniques. Finally, the value of mathematics is demonstrated through its integration with other academic areas, such as literature and science.

Science

The elementary science program uses a "hands-on," inquiry-oriented approach to introduce the basic concepts and processes of science. Process skills stressed include: observing, classifying, predicting, interpreting data, formulating hypotheses and designing experiments. These processes are used in developing a basic understanding of life, physical, earth and space science. All grade levels include at least three major science studies. Science units include:

K	Schoolyard Science, Seasons, Balls and Ramps, Floating and Sinking
Gr. 1	Weather, Solids and Liquids, Organisms, Magnets
Gr. 2	Life Cycles of Plants and Animals, Balance, Weight & Motion, Mini-studies: Rocks, Sound
Gr. 3	Electric Circuits, Soils, Owls/Web of Life, Chemical Tests
Gr. 4	Land and Water, Experiments with Plants, Astronomy
Gr. 5/6	Ecosystems, Simple Engineering, Transport Systems, Micro-worlds, Energy Sources, Scientific Method and Engineering Design

Social Studies

At each grade level, Acton's History and Social Studies curriculum addresses the four "strands" of history, geography, civics and economics. The curriculum is

organized around essential, open-ended questions that promote reflection and discussion; wherever possible, we seek to enrich our History and Social Studies program through the study of literature and language arts. The curriculum topics are as follows:

K	Living, learning and Working Together
Gr. 1	Some Ways Same, Some Ways Different
Gr. 2	Long Ago and Far Away
Gr. 3	The Study of Massachusetts
Gr. 4	People Come to North America
Gr. 5	American History: The Formation of a New Nation
Gr. 6	Ancient Civilizations

Throughout our History & Social Studies curriculum, we strive to foster habits of mind that enable children to grow into thoughtful, participatory, respectful members of society.

Physical Education

The program includes: physical fitness, rhythms, group games, team games, stunts, tumbling, movement exploration, basketball, softball, individual sports, speed ball, volleyball, track and field, indoor hockey, gymnastics, dance, rope skipping, ropes course, confidence building activities and group cooperation initiative tests.

Health Education

All grades have objectives which deal with the following strands: Emotional and Social Health; Safety and First Aid; Physical Wellness; Dependency (Alcohol and Drug Education); and Growth and Development (includes understanding health related problems). From time to time, the district also provides parent education opportunities on health related topics.

Library/Media Centers

There is an automated library/media center in each school. All of the libraries provide books and audiovisual materials for curriculum support, leisure reading, research, reference and enrichment.

The library/media centers are available for use by scheduled classes, small groups and for independent study. Story hours are provided for younger students and instruction in the use of the library is available to all grade levels. More emphasis is being placed on electronic search strategies (online catalog, encyclopedias and periodical indexes on CD-ROM, and the Internet) as more equipment and networking capabilities become available. There is also a strong emphasis on books and literature to support all reading and whole language programs.

Visual Arts Department

The visual arts department has units of study that are designed to encourage active student participation in the following areas: creating art, appreciating art, learning about art in relation to other cultures, and beginning to make judgments about works of art. This approach allows students to develop self-confidence while learning more about themselves, their environment, artists and different cultures. Learning standards include demonstrating respect for individual differences and appreciation for the efforts of others; developing responsibility in the care and sharing of materials and resources; using basic techniques, skills, tools and materials to explore a variety of media; creating and presenting works that reflect personal, family and cultural heritage. Students meet with an art specialist once a week. At McCarthy-Towne School, teachers also work with an Art Integration consultant to integrate arts into the curriculum.

Music/Performing Arts

All students have music with a music specialist at least once a week. The music program is comprehensive enough to include skill development in singing, playing classroom instruments, listening, creating, moving and experiencing relationships with other arts. The goal of all arts education is to foster competence in self-discovery and the communication of human feelings. Music education integrated with the child's early experiences encourages sensitivity to human feeling and social context. Music facilitates the audio-tactile development in the eyes and ears, thereby strengthening the motor coordination.

Band instrument class instruction is offered for a fee, beginning in grade 5. Lessons are held before school with a school band rehearsal held once per week at the beginning of the school day.

VI. ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS COMMON TO ALL FIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- Each school has wireless internet access and Smart Boards in all 4th, 5th and 6th grade classrooms. There are mobile laptop carts available for all student use, K-6.
- Each school offers whole-school events such as orientation programs for Kindergarten parents and children as the school year begins. There are back-to-school nights in the fall and Memorial Day programs in the spring.
- Teachers have opportunities for systemwide in-service professional development programs or continued formal course work, and to attend professional conferences and institutes. In addition, many faculty in each school work with student teachers. Through their actions, the faculty shows that they are committed to being "lifelong learners."
- Each school hosts Before and After School Care programs.
- Vital parent organizations play an active role in the life of the schools. These organizations raise funds for school-wide projects and sponsor assembly programs that enrich each school's cultural and aesthetic life with musicians, storytellers and other performers. Parent organizations also staff the "Safe Arrival" hot lines, produce school newsletters, host ice cream socials and arrange meetings and other events to welcome newcomers.
- Each school holds special receptions and events to acknowledge and honor the parents and volunteers who assist during the school year.

VII. DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS (in alphabetical order)

CONANT SCHOOL: *Where the Whole Child is the Whole Idea*

The Conant Elementary School, located at 80 Taylor Road, was constructed in 1971. It is a one-story facility with a contemporary architectural design. The building's twenty classrooms are arranged in clusters of five that open onto "pod" areas utilized for large and small group instruction. Conant also has a cafetorium, gymnasium, library/media center, computer lab, art room and several suites of small rooms used for support services. Approximately 488 students are enrolled

in Kindergarten through grade six. There are three sections at each grade level, including one All-Day Kindergarten program. Grade 1-6 classes range in size from 20-25.

Conant's educational focus is on promoting high standards and developing a strong academic program. Our approach to teaching is based on current research and evidence of best practice. Instructional strategies and materials support our philosophy of engaging the whole child, and many subject areas are integrated into each thematic unit taught. Enter a classroom and you will see students engaged in the learning process, working cooperatively, communicating effectively, and thinking critically and creatively. This is particularly evident in our inquiry approach to math and science. Both disciplines have an emphasis on problem solving, critical thinking, and the development of mathematical and scientific skills.

At Conant, we believe that listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be developed simultaneously and integrated throughout the curriculum. To accomplish this, our language arts program is literature based and is designed so that students are directly taught skills and strategies pertaining to oral language, reading, and writing. Technology is used as a learning tool throughout the curriculum. It reinforces and enhances all aspects of attaining and applying knowledge. Computers and multi-media tools assist students in the development of relevant technology skills and in obtaining valuable information that supports instructional goals.

Conant's core value is respect, which is envisioned as flowing in all directions among parents, children, and staff. The community grounds itself in the expectation that all its constituents will treat each other with kindness and respect through our words and actions. Our clear emphasis on respect is a key ingredient in fostering our harmonious school culture. Conant welcomes a large international population, and offers many opportunities at each grade level for cultural sharing and celebrating its diversity. 45 percent of our students speak at least one language other than English --- at least 20 languages and dialects are represented at the school.

In addition to our shared values, community events bring Conant together on a regular basis. Our Student Council helps us celebrate Pajama Day and Valentine's Day. Our Community Service Learning Committee organizes creative outreach initiatives. Once a month, the school participates in an All School Meeting to share our talents and interests, to explore our shared values, and to

make music together. Each grade takes responsibility for one of the Meetings during the year, and have performed dance, drama, poetry, and songs for their fellow Conant students.

Conant hosts Before and After School Care programs, as well as an Extended Day Kindergarten Program, in partnership with Community Education. Care is provided from 7 a.m. until the start of school and from the close of school until 5:45 p.m. each day. Children have the opportunity to participate in a range of individual and group activities; healthy snacks are provided, and time is always set aside for outside play after school. More information is available through Community Education office.

Parents play an important role at Conant School. They volunteer in our classrooms and our library, chaperone field trips, and represent the community on a wide range of Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) committees. Conant is fortunate to have an active PTO that works collaboratively with the staff to implement the school's vision and goals. In addition to multiple fund-raising events, the PTO sponsors many cultural arts programs and activities, including our unique Nature Program. We welcome and celebrate all parent contributions!

C.T. DOUGLAS SCHOOL: *At Douglas, diversity, inquiry, growth and caring are encouraged, developed and celebrated.*

The Douglas Elementary School has 21 classes of students, including an All-Day Kindergarten Program, special education programs, and a Computer Lab. The building also contains a cafetorium, a gymnasium, a library, and additional rooms/offices/spaces that offer support services for the school. Douglas enrolls approximately 489 students in grades K-6 in sizes ranging from 19 to 25.

A variety of instructional strategies and grouping procedures are used to provide effective instruction and to accommodate the range of student learning styles. Students receive instruction in small and large groups, and on an individual basis. Teaching methods and approaches employed by the collaborative faculty include balanced reading programs, direct instruction, Cooperative Learning, team teaching, partnered cross-grade learning, active inquiry-based learning, field trips, and thematic teaching. Our teaching materials include a strong phonics program, children's literature, Guide Reading, Scott Foresman Reading Street Curriculum; a math program entitled *Everyday Mathematics*; technology; science units from *Science and Technology for Children*, as

well as other investigations, experiments, and nature walks; social studies units, literature, texts, research endeavors, and community resources. Students are active and resourceful learners who are immersed in meaningful, interesting, and integrated curriculum work.

Our Computer Specialists developed and teach an integrated computer curriculum. Art, music, and physical education both support and are supported by our language arts, math, science, and social studies curriculum. Grade level jobs include communication, recycling, the school store, horticulture, environmental awareness, a school post office, and community service. The two main focus areas for the Douglas staff this year are to enhance teacher collaboration and to focus on assessment practices, while fostering a respectful environment of belonging and safety for all students, staff and parents.

Over 200 parent volunteers are an active part of the Douglas Community. Our Parent Teacher Organization meets monthly to participate in programs and to discuss ways to support our school. The P.T.O. also organizes our cultural enrichment programs and funds our sixth grade play plays produced by each class. At school parents help students to operate a school store, a school-wide letter writing endeavor, with classroom science lessons, and with nature walks. The thirteen member School Council formulates our School Improvement Plan, serves as an important advisory body, and is a forum to discuss issues of the day.

Douglas attracts an international population. We take every opportunity to learn from and celebrate our diversity, including our 27% international student population representing 22 different countries. We also have a clear set of expectations centering around respectfulness and perseverance. We have taught the Japanese culture and language to our students for the past nine years. This year our Japanese Language Classes are taught using an immersion and traditional teaching approach to student from Kindergarten to Second Grade. We also teach Chinese in grades 3 & 4 during the school day.

We have before and after school programs, entitled "Douglas at Dawn/Dusk," "The Breakfast Club," and "Work and Play" to meet the interests and needs of our students. The Douglas community has articulated our academic, social, and personal goals for students and has developed expected behavioral priorities addressing the areas of health and safety, respect, pride and responsibility, and trust. Students learn about human commonalities amidst their differences. Once a month, the school assembles in a Community Meeting to discuss and reinforce

our values, to enjoy our talents and interests, to engage in challenges that build community, and to sing together.

Vision Statement: Douglas School seeks to provide an enriching, safe and supportive environment in which we celebrate learning in a collaborative and caring community. We aspire to promote high standards for the academic and personal growth of students, staff and parents, always striving to nurture respect for our diverse individual needs and values.

GATES SCHOOL: *built upon a foundation of values consisting of generosity, acceptance, trust & respect, enthusiasm, and scholarship. At Gates we proudly, “Reach for the Stars!”*

The Gates School, built in 1968, currently houses 21 classroom sections in grades K-6. The building contains a library, cafeteria, a gymnasium and a computer lab. We have three classrooms at each grade level K - 6. All classrooms are heterogeneous and are primarily self-contained, which means that one teacher is responsible for all subject areas, except for art, music and physical education. Presently we have a student population of 490, with class sizes that range from 20-26.

The Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley math program is offered to students in grades 1 – 6. The language arts and reading program in grades 1 – 6 is a multifaceted approach using a variety of resources. Teachers use the Bradley Reading and Language Arts Program, Scott Foresman, and trade books. Empowering Writers and the Six Traits model are applied in teaching writing skills. System-wide topics are covered in science and social studies. Learning is enhanced through related field trips and special in-school presentations. Art and music teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate curriculum with art and music projects. The computer lab offers technology instruction to students grades K – 6. Students enjoy participating in art, music and physical education each week.

The Gates School parent community continues to be a very active and supportive group to the life of the school through the PTO and School Council. The PTO has provided the funding for a computer assistant, classroom assistants, a media assistant, various materials and equipment (i.e. computers & Smartboards), cultural enrichment programs, and other activities. In addition, the PTO provides volunteer services and conducts school-wide social functions, school newsletter,

and supports a variety of Grade 6 activities such as the Yearbook, Nature's Classroom, the Grade 6 Play, and many more activities.

The School Council is composed of parents, staff and community people who meet monthly to discuss and plan for the School Improvement Plan. The 2010 - 2011 School Improvement Plan focuses on reading assessments used in grades K – 6 and implementing the Anti-bullying policy. At the Gates School we follow the Second Step social skills program in grades K – 4 and students in grade 5 & 6 use Steps for Respect, a bullying prevention program.

New core values have been established and the Gates School is celebrating generosity, acceptance, trust & respect, enthusiasm, and scholarship. Each month the school gathers to celebrate core values through song, performances, stories, and plays. Students are proud to have flags from their countries displayed in the cafeteria. Community Service is highly valued at the Gates School. We take pride in giving back to our community.

The Gates School offers both a before and after school extended day program that is run by Community Ed. In addition to childcare, students enjoy participating in chorus, band, and student council. We are invested in technology and are pleased to have Smartboards in all of our 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade classrooms, desktop computers in the lab, wireless technology, and a laptop cart. We are a community of learners that value high expectations, respect individual differences, and celebrate the diversity of our school population.

McCARTHY-TOWNE SCHOOL *emphasizes the process of learning, the responsibilities of students, the importance of the arts and integrated curricula.*

McCarthy-Towne school was founded in 1971 by Acton parents. In 2002 the school moved to its new home in the Parker Damon Building, named after McCarthy-Towne's first principal. McCarthy-Towne has a student population of approximately 500 students in K-6th grade with 3 sections in each grade. In addition to our wonderful classrooms, the building contains a music room, cafetorium, library (which combines the collections of both McCarthy-Towne and Merriam schools), a gymnasium, our Sloyd classroom (our 3-dimensional art program) and additional support rooms. Students also have access to an upper and lower playground area as well as an outdoor nature classroom.

McCarthy-Towne hosts Before and After School Care programs, in partnership with Community Education. Care is provided from 7 AM until the start of school

and from the close of school until 5:45 PM each day. Children have the opportunity to participate in a range of individual and group activities; healthy snacks are provided, and time is always set aside for outside play after school.

McCarthy-Towne is a community of learners where children, teachers, and families work cooperatively to encourage the individual growth and success of students in a changing world. The teachers at McCarthy-Towne School use activities and lessons that encourage independence and instill a life-long enthusiasm for learning. Students are trusted to take an active role in their own education and are given the responsibility for learning independently, solving problems, making decisions and building a healthy classroom community. Parents are actively involved in the students' success by volunteering in classrooms and on field trips, attending student portfolio conferences and supporting our faculty and staff.

McCarthy-Towne utilizes an integrated curricula and thematic approach in the classroom. For instance, Kindergarten students will combine math, language arts, writing, science, and geography in their "Bear" unit of study. Our philosophy is to present materials in a variety of ways in order to accommodate different learning styles, to help students develop their own set of problem-solving strategies and to support individual student goals, strengths and needs. For various disciplines and units, some "core texts" form the foundation from which teachers develop their instructional plans. The Scott Foresman *enVision Math Program* is utilized K-6th grade. Teachers, however, draw from a variety of sources, methods and texts in their daily instructions. This provides flexibility for teachers to adapt curriculum to individual and class needs, changes in information and curriculum mandates.

Like other academic disciplines, music, art and computer technology are integrated into the instructional program at McCarthy-Towne. For example, cultural units of study, including Ghana, Egypt, Japan, North American geography, Colonial times and Native Americans are coordinated with song, dance, games and instruments in Music class. Students also have the ability to use computers both in their classrooms via two Mac laptop mobile labs and in the computer lab to do research on their unit of study. Technology projects are designed at grade-level by both teachers and students. Projects include creating podcasts, movies, PowerPoint presentations and more. In addition, SMART Boards (interactive whiteboards) are in all 4th, 5th and 6th grade classes enabling new ways to view and enhance curriculum.

The other critical component to our school's success is our wonderful parent community. Since its beginning, McCarthy-Towne parents have been actively involved in and are an essential part of the school. Parents support our faculty and students by volunteering in the classrooms, library, computer lab, office, Safe Arrival program, and in various classroom assistant positions. Parents also provide guidance to faculty and staff by their involvement in the School Council and the Parent, Teacher, Student Organization's (PTSO) committees. The PTSO does significant fund raising to fund additional classroom assistants and social events (Fall Social and Book Fair, Family Game Night, Ice Cream Social), subsidize field trips and on-site presentations, and make purchases of some equipment for the school. The PTSO contributions also enable our school to make the library available 5 days a week which allows for supplemental research time on units of study.

McCarthy-Towne's greatest source of strength is its community of teachers, staff, students and parents. To help develop a spirit of community across grade levels, classrooms are not located by grade level but are mixed-grade groupings. Community is also emphasized through cross-grade level programs and projects like our Reading, Computer and Bus Buddies programs. A program unique to McCarthy-Towne is the 6th grade volunteer program called TCM (Together C.A.S.E. and McCarthy-Towne) in which 6th graders volunteer to work with students in the C.A.S.E. classrooms, which are housed at McCarthy-Towne. Reaching beyond our school community, the Student Council performs community service by hosting food, clothing and household goods collections for local agencies, and sponsors the annual Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF campaign.

Another important part of our community philosophy is to celebrate diversity and value the influence of our international families. Many members of our community come here from Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Europe. They come with their cultures, and enrich the school community by sharing them in the classroom, on the playgrounds and during community gatherings including the McCarthy-Towne/Merriam Schools International Night. All members of the McCarthy-Towne community are valued and are considered an integral part of the school.

MERRIAM SCHOOL (“Holding Community at Our Center”) *is structured to promote community, collaboration, and creativity, and is organized primarily into looping classes that stay together with the same teacher for two years whenever possible. Students and teachers actively participate in a project-based curriculum with an emphasis on the core values of respect, persistence and risk-taking.*

The Merriam School reopened for the 1993-94 school year, then moved into the new Parker Damon Building in 2002. The school now serves approximately 551 children in grades Kindergarten through six, in 24 classes.

The mission of the Merriam School community is to create and sustain an environment that promotes academic excellence, encourages social development, fosters emotional well-being, and instills a passion for life-long learning. We strive to combine the thought provoking enriching qualities of a children's museum with the nurturing support of a family and the learning structure of a school. We accomplish this by holding community at our center: Merriam parents, teachers, and students learn and work closely together.

Merriam students are active participants as they gain skills and learn to problem solve and to be independent thinkers in all areas of their studies. Students are assigned projects as a means to integrate and deepen different areas of learning. Through these projects, students not only learn a great deal of information, but also how to set goals, work in groups, and present their learning to an audience. Both teachers and students are often involved with the assessment of projects.

Students grow in confidence not only from their work in the academic disciplines, but from the time spent learning with others and by giving to their community. Older children are assigned to younger children as buddies. Children across grade levels are assigned to family groups, to create bonds and to share learning at school events such as All-School Meeting, Community Day, Theme Days, and Field Day. All classroom teachers utilize the Open Circle program, which helps children to learn social skills and conflict resolution tools, and to be effective learners when working in groups. In addition, school-wide curriculum themes provide opportunities for the community to work together. For the 2010-11 school year, all students are involved in studies related to the overall theme '*Core Values in Action*'. All Merriam students participate in service learning projects that take the form of school jobs or other projects designed to help people outside of the school community.

Collaboration is central to the life of the professional staff at Merriam. The teachers meet regularly – at least once a week – to prepare, design, and coordinate curriculum and to share ideas with one another. The in-depth and creative projects that students undertake are a direct result of this teacher collaboration. All support staff are encouraged to work in the classrooms and to be an integral part of the classroom life. A classroom assistant for **every** class is a mainstay of

the school, and these assistants become major participants in the students' education.

Merriam parents come to three conferences during the year to hear about their children's progress. They meet with the classroom teachers in both beginning and end of year conferences. Mid-year, we have a very unique student-led conference. All students reflect on their goals, expectations, and progress, and then organize this material into an informative, rewarding presentation for their parents. It is often a highlight of the year for both parents and children.

Merriam has a before and after school program, entitled "Merriam After Hours". The program begins in the morning at 7 am and runs until 6 pm in the evening. Leah Richardson, one of our third and fourth grade teachers, is the coordinator of the program. In addition, enrichment classes are available for students, often before and after school.

The Merriam community draws its strength from the joint efforts of staff, parents, children and community representatives. These groups worked together to plan Merriam and are all still very actively involved in its development. This collaboration continues through many committees that perform a variety of services, from fund-raising to teacher hiring to event planning. Community is clearly at our center at Merriam School.

* * *

Other sources of program information are:

Superintendent of Schools.....	Stephen E. Mills 978-264-4700, Ext. 3211
Director of Curriculum and Assessment.....	Deborah Bookis 978-264-4700, Ext. 3213
Director of Personnel/Admin. Services.....	Marie Altieri 978-264-4700, Ext. 3209
Director of Pupil Services.....	Elizabeth L. Huber 978-264-4700, Ext. 3265
Registrar.....	Ruth Cvitkovich 978-264-4700, Ext. 3214

KINDERGARTEN HANDBOOK 2011

SECTION 3 AN INTRODUCTION TO KINDERGARTEN

This last section of the Kindergarten orientation booklet is intended for parents as a supplement to the regular elementary school description booklet. It should answer many of your questions about Kindergarten and its routines.

We are happy to welcome you and your child to Kindergarten, the beginning of a thirteen-year sojourn in our schools. We hope that you will visit the school and actively support your child by keeping in close contact with the teacher. There will be many opportunities to help the class. Next fall you will receive more information about ways in which you can do this.

Acton has five elementary schools:

- Conant School
- Douglas School
- Gates School
- McCarthy-Towne School
- Merriam School

Definition of Kindergarten

kin-der-gar-ten  (kĭn' dĕr-gär'tn, -dn)

n. (G., lit., garden of children < *kinder*, gen. pl. of *kind*, child (see KIND) + *garten*, GARDEN) a school or class of young children, usually four to six years old, that prepares them for first grade and that develops basic skills and social behavior by games, exercises, music, simple handicrafts, etc. – kin'der-gart'-ner, kin'der-gar'ten-er (-gart'ner) n.

Description of Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a time to find out that wanting to know is exciting, stimulating and fulfilling. It is a time to ask questions, seek answers, wherever they are to be found and to exchange ideas, knowledge and impressions. It is a time to learn that mistakes and confusion can be turned into clarification and enlightenment.²

Kindergarten is a place where a young child feels known; where he/she feels safe; where he/she feels free and where he/she can count on being understood.

Purpose of Kindergarten

The purpose of Kindergarten is to prepare the child for the school experience. This involves the development of the whole child - socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.

Kindergarten provides children with a common base of vocabulary and experience which serves as a foundation for the teaching of academics and helps them to learn how to function comfortably and safely in the larger environment of a school. Children should enter Kindergarten at a time when they are ready to learn the vast array of skills and understandings essential to all later learning and living.

1. Resource Unknown
2. Witty, Paul and Kopel, David: Reading and the Education Process, Ginn and Company, Boston, p. 182.

Kindergarten Objectives

Kindergarten provides certain basic learning experiences for the child. These experiences are the foundation on which the child's academic growth develops. Objectives have been established to provide a framework for these experiences.

Kindergarten objectives include helping the child:

- to gain a sense of self-worth
- to gain a sense of self-confidence
- to be sensitive to the needs of others
- to respect authority and property
- to learn to share with others
- to learn the art of good sportsmanship
- to learn to work well with others
- to learn to listen attentively
- to learn to make good use of time
- to learn to share ideas with others
- to develop good speech and language habits
- to develop self-control
- to learn to listen to and follow directions
- to enjoy stories, poetry and books
- to begin to develop skills basic to the regular academic program.

Readiness for School

To help your child have a positive school experience, parents can:

- speak enthusiastically about school
- give the child responsibilities at home, such as errands and chores
- read to the child
- allow and encourage social interaction with the child's peers
- allow the child to be away from home for short periods
- help the child learn his/her name, address and telephone number
- encourage the child to dress himself/herself
- help the child learn to manipulate buttons, zippers, boots, mittens and gloves
- encourage the child to be kind, considerate and courteous to others
- listen to him/her
- encourage the child to express him or herself verbally, using complete sentences and complete thoughts.
- encourage and use conversation whenever possible.

Clothing Needs

If you have ever seen twenty-three Kindergarten children getting ready to go home, you understand the clothing needs!

Clothing should be:

- simple and easy to manage
- loose and comfortable to play in
- kept in repair - zippers working easily and buttons which attach tightly
- appropriate for weather conditions. We do go out to play. Boots, mittens and proper head coverings are essential in cold weather.
- labeled to avoid confusion.

Health and Safety Practices

You can help your child develop proper attitudes toward health and safety. We offer the following suggestions:

- help your child become familiar with his/her bus stops and the school.
- explain to your child safe and appropriate behavior at the bus stop.
- teach your child to obey traffic rules.
- encourage safe and courteous behavior while riding the bus.
- please continue to tell your children that under no circumstances are they to go with strangers.
- do not allow sharp objects or "potential weapons" to be taken to school.

Health habits may be strengthened when home and school work together. We will encourage your child to:

- attend to his/her toilet needs, to wash his/her hands without help and to have regard for his/her personal appearance
- sneeze or cough into his/her elbow
- use a tissue
- rest and relax quietly
- get plenty of rest
- eat a good breakfast.

Revised 10/21/10

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, limited English proficient, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, handicap or homeless in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs, and activities.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts' compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or MGL ch. 76, sec.5 is directed to contact the Director of Pupil Services, Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA, telephone number 978-264-4700, x3265, who has been designated by the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts to coordinate the Districts' efforts to comply with these laws, or write to the Office for Civil Rights, J. F. Kennedy Federal Building, Room 1875, Boston, MA 02203, or the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Program Quality Assurance Services, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148.