

WORD FROM WILLIAMS

January 26, 2010

Williams PTO Announces February Technology Fund Drive



The Williams PTO is pleased to announce the formal kickoff of the Williams Technology Campaign. Our goal is to raise \$136,000 during the next two years, of which \$75,000 will come from family contributions during a technology fund drive in February 2010. The February fund drive won't involve any events. It is comprised of campaign committee

members contacting Williams' families to ask for donations.

Unlike many other Newton Schools, Williams has never held a major technology fund drive. We are in desperate need of some relatively basic improvement. The state of the technology in our classrooms is a source of frustration for students and teachers. Our children are working on computers that are obsolete.

Technology in the classroom is *not* about teaching kids how to use computers. It's about having the best tools available to enhance learning. Technology tools have changed the way our children learn to write and revise their work, perform research, make presentations, summarize their learning on a topic, and practice concepts. Today's technology tools are not an end in themselves, they are a means to education.

As a result of communications about the campaign in the fall, and general Williams PTO fundraising, **we have received \$18,000 in pledges and gifts!** We have used these funds to purchase 9 laptops, 7 ELMO Visual Presenters and 8 LCD Projectors, which closes the gap for classroom projectors.

Our Technology Campaign will only be successful if we have broad support from the entire community. A member of our team of volunteers will contact you personally in February to ask for your support. Thank you for your support! For more information: Brian Gorin, Technology Fundraising Chair, bgorin@rcn.com.

January

- 28 6:30 Winter Wonder Night
- 29 Teacher Appreciation Coffee

February

- 3 Winter Concert
- 4 School-wide early release
- 4 7 p.m. Ross Greene "Creative Problem Solving" Williams
- 5 6 p.m. Pizza & Movie night
- 15-19 Winter Vacation: No School

March

- 4 to 19 Williams Online Auction
- 18 School-wide early release
- 20 7 p.m. Cabernet & Cabaret
- 23 Tuesday: School Ends at 3 p.m. (Group A stays all day)
- 24 Wednesday: School ends at 12:30 p.m.

April

- 2 Good Friday: NO SCHOOL

News From Williams Principal Dr. Midge Connolly

I would like to wish all of you a Happy New Year. It is difficult to believe that the year is just about half over. I would also like to thank all of you for making my transition into my new role a relatively smooth one! Much has gone on over the last several months and I wanted to share some highlights and also touch upon some operational issues that remain a concern.



As you know, Williams Elementary School is an inclusive school setting. We as a faculty and staff embrace this idea in the many ways we interact with your children every day. During early December we celebrated “inclusion week” which allowed all members of the community; students, teachers, staff and families to take stock of the work that is done at Williams. What we were all able to see is that at Williams we move beyond the rhetoric of “inclusion” and try to insure that all children who walk through our doors feel both welcomed and challenged. As I reflect on the last few months, it is clear that the manner in which diversity is both embraced and celebrated is an integral part of how the school operates, and is a powerful message to those both inside and outside of the our community.

Although I have not implemented many changes in my short tenure, I did make some schedule changes this past summer to begin to create a Professional Learning Community at Williams. The changes were made to insure that teachers on the same grade level would have shared planning and instructional time. This was done to allow for teams of grade level teachers to meet and discuss student learning and their own instruction during the day in the immediacy of their work. I believe we have begun to reap the benefits of these changes and we will continue to monitor this work in the coming months.



We are a school that uses data to inform instruction. Teachers are consistently assessing children to make certain that we are meeting students where they are and moving them forward. Although there are many formalized assessments that classroom teachers use to better understand your child as a learner and to make sure children meet local and state benchmarks, teachers also use their daily interactions and lessons to gain immediate feedback and make changes to meet the needs of your children. We will continue to increase our use of data to inform our work as we move forward in the coming months and years.

Technology, technology... Next month officially kicks off our technology fund drive. Over the past five months we have had a number of kind donors, whose generosity has allowed us to place an LCD projector in every classroom, an ELMO at every grade level and increased our lap tops building-wide by sixteen. Although we are extremely grateful, we still have a long way to go to make sure that Williams is able to prepare our students for the 21st century.

To that end, on the evening of January 28, 2010 we will be hosting a Winter Wonder Night at Williams. On that evening you will have the opportunity to engage in academic activities with your children, watch streaming videos of work that has been completed by some of our students and observe some of the ways that technology is currently being used at Williams, as well as how it could be used if we had more technology in our building. We welcome all Williams families to this event!

I just wanted to add a few other operational concerns that I feel need to be addressed. First, the Blue Zone: all members of our community know the rules of the Blue Zone and I implore you to follow them. There is no stopping or parking on Grove Street unless your car fits completely inside the Blue Zone in front of the school (or on the opposite side of the street). There will be a large orange cone put out in front of the handicap curb-cut. If the back of your car is not in front of this cone, you must go around the block. People have begun to line up all the way down Grove Street and wait. This is unacceptable, unsafe behavior which is putting both children and other vehicles in danger. People must take the lap around the block to keep the area in front of the school safe. If people continue to not follow the rules, the Blue Zone in the front of the building will be closed. Second, I have a few comments about dogs on the Williams grounds. Please make sure that if

you bring your dog to school it is on a leash and is both dog and people friendly and safe. Additionally, under no circumstances should anyone bring a dog into the school building even to pick up from aftercare. We have many children who are extremely allergic and we need to look out for their safety.

And finally, as we begin the New Year I would ask that you say good-bye to your children at the door to the school or just inside. I certainly understand if you have a message for the teacher or need to stop in the office to see the nurse, but even then I would ask that you please exit the building no later than 8:40 a.m. What has been happening is that some folks are not leaving the building by this time which results in children missing critical instructional time. Again, I understand that there are exceptions and even for some children in the lower grades that this is not yet appropriate, but I would ask that we as a community please try and be sure the halls are cleared by 8:40 a.m.

I thank you for your continued support and invite you to meet with me if you have questions, suggestions or concerns. There is always much to do here at Williams and we will continue to do the challenging, but most enjoyable work before us. What a wonderful school and community we have.

Contact: Midge.Connolly@newton.k12.ma.us

Williams Winter Concert Wed, Feb. 3

-By Martha Holmes, Williams music teacher



The Williams Winter Concert will take place on Wed. Feb. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

The Orchestra, 5th grade band, 4th grade chorus, and 5th grade chorus will performing. It's going to be a great concert! Hope to see you there.

Williams Green Team Takes Excess Cafeteria Food to Newton Food Pantry

By Robyn & Nathan Phillips, Williams Green Team



The Green Team is grateful to Dr. Connolly for reaching out to us about excess unopened cafeteria food she observed going to waste. We have now implemented a system in which Dr. Connolly collects unopened milk cartons and other food items and stores them in her office refrigerator. On each Wednesday morning the Green Team delivers these items to the Newton Food Pantry (located in the basement of the Waban Library).

It is important to note that children are encouraged to eat all of their food, and that the leftover items are collected in a manner consistent with that consideration.

Bring your whole family to "Winter Wonder Night at Williams on Thursday at 6:30 to 7:45 p.m.



Do you have the winter blahs? Are you tired of slipping and sliding on the ice? We have the cure! Join Dr. Connolly and some of the Williams faculty on Thursday evening, Jan. 28 from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. at Williams. Come out of hibernation and:

- Catch up with friends
- Enjoy curriculum-based activities
- Try out a proscope
- See what your kids have been working on at school
- Check out brand new streaming videos of students by students
- See how our newest tech equipment is being used in the classrooms

We hope to see you there!

Williams SpedPac Shares Meetings and Resources

by Beth Doran, Vivian Glassman, and Gail Sokoloff



The Williams Special Education Parent Advisory Council has some information to share with all the parents at Williams -- whether parenting a child with special needs or not. The following presentations are lined up for the next three SPED PAC meetings:

Tuesday, February 2: Brain Gym (R) Introduction from Bonnie Hershey

Tuesday, March 2 - Assistive Technology (AT) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in NPS by Karen Janowski and Karen Clay

Thursday, April 8 - Academic Strategies in Newton High Schools: the Who, Why, When, Where and How! a presentation by Ann Walker and Walter Lyons and staff.

All meetings are at the Ed Center, 100 Walnut Street, room 210, and begin at 7:30 pm. Light snacks and networking at 7:15 pm.

Autism Speaks is having a family day at Boston University's Women's Ice Hockey Game along with the BU Terriers Men's Ice Hockey Team! It will be Sunday, Feb. 21 at 2:30 at the Walter Brown Arena on Babcock Street in Boston. Please contact Amy Tantillo at 781-461-8800 or by email at amy.tantillo@autismspeaks.org to reserve your FREE "Family Day" tickets.

The Newton Parent Advisory Council on Special Education (SPED PAC) serves as a liaison between parents of students with special needs and school district administrators. As mandated by Massachusetts law, it provides feedback to the district on special education programs and policies, and participates in their planning and development.

The following are resources that families might find useful:

- The Student Services Department has published the 2009-2010 [Newton Public Schools' Guide to Special Education Program](#), which provides an overview of the programs available in our schools.
- The Lurie Family Autism LADDERS program is proud to announce the 3rd Annual: Roger A. Bauman M.D. [Parent Lecture Series for 2010 January - June 2010 Speaker/Topic Schedule](#)
- [SPED Child and Teen](#), lists disability services and events in greater Massachusetts.
- Third Annual [Summer Camp and Recreation Expo for Children with Special Needs](#) Sunday, Feb 28 at Framingham High School.

Clear Sidewalks Benefit All Of Us

by Christine Lacey, Safe Routes to School



Walking to school is good for the environment, good for the health of our kids, and good for reducing Blue Zone safety hazards. We need to make walking a year round activity!

Right now, the City of Newton does not require residents to clear the snow from their sidewalks. This is a hazard for everyone.

Please contact your Aldermen and Mayor Warren and let them know if you support a residential sidewalk snow removal ordinance and enforcement of the current ordinance, which prohibits anyone from shoveling snow from their property onto the sidewalks. You can contact Newton Mayor Setti Warren: swarren@newtonma.gov or 617-796-1100; Aldermen dolson@newtonma.gov (City Clerk's e-mail, he will forward to all the Aldermen) OR find your Alderman at www.newtonma.gov.

For questions, please contact us at SafeSidewalks@gmail.com (a coalition of Newton organizations working together on pedestrian safety.)

Williams Parents Continue Earning Money for the Williams PTO While Shopping

By Gail Sokoloff & Carol Bradford Roe



Hooray!! Williams parents are continuing to earn money for the PTO while shopping. Between Amazon and Shaw's (both very popular shopping spots), the PTO is doing well!

Amazon Rewards: During the months of November and December, Williams families and friends clicked through the Williams PTO [Amazon link](#) and earned more than **\$400** for the Williams PTO. So far in the month of January, we've raised \$40. Don't forget to continue clicking on the link when shopping at Amazon.com, and earn extra money for the Williams PTO!

Shaw's Rewards: Have you signed up for the Shaw's Community Rewards program? Shaw's donates 1% of purchases on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to the Williams PTO. Just register your Shaw's card through the link on the Williamspto.org website and start shopping!

Save the Dates for Pizza & Movie Night; Cabernet & Cabaret

By Gail Sokoloff & Carol Bradford Roe

There are lots of great PTO activities going on in the next few months. Save **Friday, Feb. 5** for Pizza and Movie Night, Pizza will be served in the cafeteria from **6 to 6:45**. The movie, **Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs** (rated PG) will start *promptly* at **7**. Please RSVP through the Evite you received to let us know whether you can make it!



We will have an adult night of dinner and entertainment called “Cabernet and Cabaret” on **Saturday, March 20, at 7 p.m.** Fellow parents and Williams faculty will entertain us at the Lasell College Campus Center. We’re combing the Williams community for singers, dancers, musicians, comedians, anyone with a gift to share and desire to step into the spotlight in a relaxed atmosphere of dinner, drinks, and fun. Show your support for Williams and make some new fans!

Camp Plus Auction Raises \$5,000 for PTO

By Gail Sokoloff & Carol Bradford Roe



During the first two weeks of January, the Williams PTO conducted its first-ever online auction. It featured several popular children’s and family summer camps, as well as lift tickets, vacations, and gift items. The auction raised \$5,000 to support the many programs and activities for our children that are sponsored by the PTO. Thanks to the many families who visited the website, referred friends, and bid.

We now turn our attention to our online spring auction, to be held March 4 - 19. We have collected dozens of items, including museum passes, sports tickets, restaurants, hotels, and gift items. We encourage parents to visit the [Williams PTO auction](#) between now and the start of the auction to see what is available as we add more and different items.

The success of our general auction depends upon the support of the Williams community. Families can help out in the following ways:

Make a Donation: Families can contribute sports tickets, vacation homes, gift certificates or goods and services to the online auction. In the past, more than half the proceeds of our auction have come from family-donated items;

Refer Friends: Most of the items – with the exception of a few items that have been designated for Williams community bidders only – are available to any and all bidders. Please forward the auction link to your friends, families and coworkers so that they can bid on items.

Bid, Bid, Bid!: We hope you will visit the website when it opens in March and bid on items of interest to you and your family.

Animals, Authors, and Survival are the Central Themes of Winter's Creative Arts & Sciences Programs at Williams

By Heidi Tobin and Melissa Wylie

Winter is a challenging time for everyone to keep warm. But did you ever think about how animals stay warm during the season? Last week kindergarteners enjoyed a visit from the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The presentation focused on winter survival and featured a live opossum and a mallard. Students learned about hibernation and migration, and explored the coping mechanisms wildlife use to help them survive.



Later this month, first graders will be treated to a visit by author and illustrator, Anne Alter. Ms. Alter has produced several children's books, including *Abigail Speaks*, *Francine's Day*, *Estelle and Lucy*, and

The Three Little Kittens. A former nursery school teacher and book publisher, Ms. Alter blends her talents to create children's books that prominently feature a variety of animal characters. On January 28th, Ms. Alter will talk to first graders about the

differences between an author and an illustrator and encourage them to create their own stories.

"A World of Owls" comes to Williams on February 4th. Several different species of owls will be the featured guests as fifth graders learn how owls use their specialized powers of sight, hearing and flight to survive and thrive. This CASC program ties in with the fifth grade's current studies on biological sciences and the environment.

In March, author and illustrator Emilie Boon will visit kindergarteners and speak to students about how books are made. Ms. Boon is best known for her beguiling depictions of animal characters. She has written and illustrated over twenty children's books including, *Perkin Meets A Star*, *Belinda's Balloon* and *123 How Many Animals Do You See?*

The pinnacle of this year's Creative Arts & Sciences programs will occur in March with an extraordinary and dynamic presentation. In the coming weeks, watch for more information in your child's folder and in the Word.

Teacher/Staff Appreciation Coffee Break, This Friday 7:30 a.m.: Volunteers and donations still needed!

Coffee and other drinks, food such as quiches, bagels with cream cheese, donuts, muffins and fruit, PAPER GOODS and FLOWERS are all welcome! Drop off your donations in the cafeteria when you come to "Winter Wonder Night" on Thursday evening, or bring them to school Friday morning. To volunteer and/or let us know what you are bringing, please contact one of us, or [sign up online](#):

<http://www.doodle.com/4y9mgz5tkst4bmca>

Erin Butterworth (thebutter5@verizon.net)

Anne Stephens (anneoc.stephens@rcn.com)

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PTO Co-Presidents' Column

Are you back into the rhythm of school after the holiday break? We hope so! Our winter calendar is moving into full swing this coming week, with lots going on.

Haiti Outreach Planned

Like most communities in our region, we have direct ties to Haiti here at Williams. Two of our own families have loved ones in Haiti, all of whom were fortunate to have survived the earthquake. Dr. Connolly and the teaching staff are in the early stages of shaping a Williams School response. As we have all seen in the news, recovery from this catastrophe will be ongoing for some time. Look for more details about how we can all participate in the spring.

Thanks for Bidding!

Did you get in on the bidding before our first ever online Camp Plus Auction closed? Our fundraising co-chairs piloted a new online process and managed a successful auction, raising over \$5,000, with many bids coming from outside of the Williams Community. Our thanks to Gail Sokoloff and Carol Bradford-Roe, and to all of you who donated items and placed bids.

Upcoming Events:

- **Winter Wonder Night, this THURSDAY – Is Your Calendar Marked?**
- This Thursday, Jan. 28 , from 6:30 – 7:45, come see Williams teachers and students in action. We don't want to give too much away, but there is a never-been-seen Williams video. AND, there will be plenty of learning activities for everyone, so bring the whole family!
- **Teacher Appreciation Coffee Break, this FRIDAY**
- The staff at Williams Elementary School does a fabulous job, and works hard all year long for our children. This Friday, Jan. 29, let's put together a table filled with so many wonderful goodies that our teachers and staff have no doubt about how much we appreciate them! Contributions are being coordinated via a doodle: <http://www.doodle.com/4y9mgz5tkst4bmca> If you have any questions, please contact Erin Butterworth (thebutter5@verizon.net), Anne Stephens (anneoc.stephens@rcn.com), or Danielle Hatem (danneil@comcast.net).

- **Dr. Ross Greene Speaking at Williams, Thursday, Feb 4**

- We're lucky to be hosting Dr. Ross Greene here at Williams next Thursday from 7 – 9 p.m. for a free presentation for Newton parents sponsored by The Newton Partnership and the Elementary Counseling Grant. Ross W. Greene, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, author of the acclaimed book The Explosive Child and the recently released Lost at School and originator of the Collaborative Problem Solving approach. Last year when he spoke, the auditorium was packed. Come learn about collaborative problem solving!



- **Winter Movie Night, Friday, Feb 5th**

- Need we say more? Don't miss this chance to eat pizza and see "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" with an auditorium full of your favorite friends. Be there!

Technology Dollars at Work at Williams



Early technology contributions have already been put to use and are making a difference in our classrooms. With so many unmet technology needs in the school, getting this equipment to teachers expands their options for instruction. In December, four new ELMOs, or Digital Visual Presenters (ELMO is the company name not an acronym), were purchased and are in use.

Watch for the kickoff to Technology Fundraising Month in February as Williams launches a capital campaign to raise money to continue to meet the technology needs in our children's classrooms!

Williams Traffic Reminder – Walk this Winter

With all the winter sleet, ice, and snow that have come our way, the blue zone has been more congested than ever at afternoon pick-up. Please remember that we must keep Grove Street unobstructed, with traffic able to move through at all times. A parent's car was hit recently as cars were attempting to pass the line of Williams cars backed up on Grove. If you cannot get into the blue zone, continue to drive past the school and turn right onto Hancock Street circling the block until you are able to enter the pick-up area. It's important to be patient and keep a cool head.



Consider bundling up and walking if you can. Winter walks can be enjoyable adventures – much more fun and relaxing than blue zone back-ups.

News from Newton Public Schools

Four new School Committee members were sworn in earlier this month. Committee members will be visiting all 25 schools in the district. A small group of them will be visiting Williams School next week as a part of this effort. Two problems facing several Newton elementary schools are dilapidated buildings and overcrowding. We are very fortunate to have a recently renovated building and comparatively moderate class sizes.

The Superintendent Search Committee has identified 10 candidates, and will begin extensive interviewing to narrow the field to 3 candidates by mid-February. The School Committee will interview the finalists and vote on their preferred candidate on Feb 26. They expect to be able to make an official announcement at the end of March.

While the budget process is only just beginning, all indications are that it will be another tough year, with no federal stimulus money coming into the system to compensate for other losses.

As always we leave you with a quote....

Technology does not drive
change -- it enables change.
-author unknown

Carie Michael, Donna Whitham, Katie Greeley, and Wendy Hurwitz

Williams PTO Co- Presidents