

Clinton Courier

A Publication of the Clinton Parent Teacher Association
Issue 7, March 2009

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

In this letter, I would like to address two issues:

Keeping our Students and Staff Safe in Two Easy Ways

The most important way is to come through the front door and sign-in. When you sign in, you should then attach a visitor's pass to your coat or someplace visible. We have too many adults in the building who are unknown to the staff and students and who do not wear a visitor's pass. There are also too many adults showing up at classrooms without making an appointment with the teacher. Both of these are unsafe practices and very distracting to our teachers and students. If you need to meet with a teacher or staff member, please contact them first to arrange an appropriate time to meet. Please understand that with almost 500 students and close to 70 staff members, we must enforce these policies to keep our students and staff safe. Thank you for understanding and adhering to these requests.

How to Solve Clinton Concerns

Over the past year and a half, the Clinton community has experienced many positive changes due in large part to the cooperation and team work that is ever present among the staff, students, and families of Clinton School. Along with change and the daily workings of an elementary school, challenges and concerns arise that need to be addressed in as timely a manner as possible. Because of this, I have restructured two important committees. One is the Principal's Advisory Council (PAC) and the other is our Building SOMEA/Administration Meeting (SAM). The restructuring is quite simple. Rather than meet on a monthly basis, both committees will meet at least every other week. It is vital for us to communicate about issues that concern us whether from our families or our staff. By communicating promptly, we will be able to work on our concerns quickly, thereby ending long periods of time in trying to solve issues that potentially could snowball.

Please remember, your first contact regarding many of the concerns we work on is with your child's teacher. If your concerns are school-based, please contact your PAC grade-level representatives (listed on page 6). I am looking forward to these changes, our more frequent interactions, and hope our resolutions are positive and painless!

MARCH-AT-A-GLANCE

1-31 ST	WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
17 TH	ST. PATRICK'S DAY
18 TH	PAC MEETING, 6:15 PM PTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 7:15 PM
20 TH	DANCE AROUND THE WORLD, 4 TH AND 5 TH GRADE CHORUS, 1 PM AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES, 7 PM
21 ST	AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES, 11 AM & 3 PM
26 TH	INTERNATIONAL DINNER, 6:15 PM
27 TH	CLINTON KIDS CONNECTION DEBUTS
29 TH	CLINTON READATHON ENDS
	<u>COMING IN APRIL</u>
2 ND	AFTER SCHOOL ENRICHMENT BEGINS
3 RD	SCHOOL PRIDE DAY



On a lighter note, it wouldn't be March without sharing some Irish words of wisdom...

"This is one race of people for whom psychoanalysis is of no use whatsoever."—Sigmund Freud (*speaking about the Irish*)

"Not a shred of evidence exists in favor of the idea that life is serious."—Brendan Gil

Slainte,

Patty

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FROM THE PTA PRESIDENT

Around this time of year many families with incoming kindergarteners request tours of Clinton. As I show these families around, I find myself having to articulate the many things that come together to make our school environment feel as warm, welcoming, and cohesive as it does. As we walk around and peek inside our wonderfully diverse classrooms full of engaged and enthusiastic children, or see students walking by the office and being greeted enthusiastically and substantively by Ms. O'Neill or Ms. Bodnar, or see parent volunteers helping in the library or reading stories to a kindergarten or first grade class, these new parents can see exactly what it is that I am trying to describe. It's a true community, one that is made possible because of the amazing partnership that exists between parents and school staff, and one that allows our children to feel happy, nurtured, and eager to learn every day.

One need only look at the month of March to see the fruits that such a partnership bears. There is so much going on in March that my calendar barely contains an entry that is not about Clinton. An auction, an all school musical revue, a food drive, a performance to showcase our chorus and our incredible 4th graders who worked so hard with our dancers-in-residence from the NJ Council for the Arts, a Readathon, an International Dinner, the debut of the Clinton Kids Connection (our first ever student newspaper made possible by a SOMEF grant), an awesome Women's History Month display in our front hallway display case, a plant sale that supports a local nursery and our school, sign-ups for our spring After School Enrichment program, and of course, St. Patrick's Day, complete with a bagpiper who will greet us all as we arrive that day! Whew!

This extraordinary list of events/programs/activities is not the work of a few people. It is the work of a community, a community of committed, talented teachers, administrators and staff, a community of involved, creative, and energetic parents, and a community of amazing children who remind us on a daily basis why we all do what we do, and how important it is!

Happy, busy March! We'll all need a nap when it's over.

Cecelia

KEEP ON READING!

The Clinton PTA and librarian Sharon Edelberg have organized the school's first-ever Readathon to benefit the Clinton School Library. Information went home in backpacks at the beginning of the month. Students pledge to read (or be read to) a certain number of minutes during the Readathon period (March 7 through March 29). They obtain sponsors who will pay them for the number of minutes they read during this period. Think of it. If every Clinton student collects \$15 in pledges, we can raise close to \$7,000, which will buy a lot of new books for the Clinton Library. So collect those pledges and read, read, read! For more information, contact Liz Salituri at 973-275-9027 or Salituri@verizon.net.

ANOTHER RECORD-BREAKING TRICKY TRAY!

Thank you so much to everyone who helped make our Sixth Annual Tricky Tray/Silent and Live Auction our most successful yet. We raised over \$23,000! Every year this event gets more popular, so we shouldn't have been too surprised that for the first time ever it was sold out by the last week of February!

We had a wonderful committee this year. Thank you to all the committee members for their hard work and dedication. Special thanks go to Nancy Mattia for rounding up so many incredible prizes and then storing all of them in her attic and to Claire Sinclair, the founder of the Tricky Tray, who graciously offered her guidance and expertise even though she is no longer a Clinton parent. Thank you to all who contributed prizes, and to those who donated food for the food drive. Plans are already in the works for next year's event, which will likely take place at a bigger venue!

CLASSROOM NEWS

Classroom News provides a wonderful opportunity for everyone in the Clinton community to learn about all the innovative and inspiring activities that engage students during the school day. Thank you to all those who've been sending in reports; they are very much appreciated. If you would like to have your child's classroom experiences included in next month's *Courier*, send an email to Bob Hugel at bhugel@scholastic.com.

Kindergarten The kindergarteners in Mrs. Shelffo's class celebrated the 100th day of school by enjoying a special 100-day snack consisting of pretzels, doughnuts, and circle cookies, which they made into the number 100. All week long, students worked on projects that involved counting to 100 by ones, fives, tens, and twenties. They also brought in a variety of items from home to illustrate the number 100. Examples included 100 toothpicks, 100 buttons, 100 beads, and 100 coins.

Second Grade Students in Mrs. Frascella's class celebrated Valentine's Day by exchanging Valentine's gifts and by creating original Valentine's Day cards to bring home to their families. Parents volunteered to bring in "red" desserts that students ate with sweet delight. Also, in honor of Black History Month, each student wrote a one-page report with a picture or drawing of a famous African-American such as Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Banneker, and Maya Angelou. Students gave oral presentations of their reports and all the reports were placed on a quilt that was put on display. In math, students began to learn how to calculate two-digit subtraction, first with manipulatives, and then with paper and pencil. Finally, the father of one of the students in the class is a high school science teacher and he talked to the class about the human heart. Students listened to each other's hearts with stethoscopes and monitored how a person's heart rate is different after he or she exercises as opposed to when he or she is sitting.

Fourth Grade More than 25 4th graders signed up to be part of Clinton's first ever student newspaper, which was made possible by a SOMEF grant. The kids have been meeting twice a week during their lunch and recess periods to plan, write, edit, and lay out the newspaper, which has been christened *The Clinton Kids Connection* after a school-wide vote was taken. These young reporters and editors are an impressive bunch, filled with lots of great ideas. Don't miss the debut issue when it comes out with report cards on March 27th. Next month the 5th graders will begin work on their own edition.

Fifth Grade Students in Mrs. Fleming's class completed activities sponsored by the New Jersey *Star Ledger's* Newspapers in Education series. Each Wednesday, in honor of Black History Month, students received 95 complimentary newspapers and students completed several activities connected to today's world. This is the second year that Mrs. Fleming's class has done this activity and not only does it spur great classroom discussions, but it also seems to inspire students to use newspapers as a resource for vocabulary enrichment. One of students' favorite activities was to find a story that interested them and write a song about that topic. That activity allowed for a tremendous amount of creativity and humor, two musts in today's classroom!

Mr. Drechsel's 5th grade class welcomed a new addition: a baby hamster adopted from Mrs. Harrigan. After a long deliberation, the class voted to name the new pet Mini Drex. If you don't see Mini Drex in his cage, you may find him happily rolling around in his plastic ball. Mr. Drechsel's students are also glad to have their teacher back. Mr. Drechsel injured his ankle and was absent for a week and a half.

The entire 5th grade celebrated Valentine's Day with a healthy bagel and fruit breakfast. This celebration was sponsored by all of the 5th grade teachers: Mrs. Fleming, Mrs. Ceccacci, Mr. Drechsel, Mrs. Kirkland, Mrs. Fox, Ms. Leibowitz, and Ms. Decker.

OUR SAY!

Hi, it's the student government again! This time we want to tell you about what we do as a group.

We have meetings twice a month, which are attended by two representatives from every 4th and 5th grade class, and our student officers. The student representatives were elected by our classes, and we think of ways to make the school better. When we finish our meetings we go back to our classes and summarize what we discussed. Our classmates are free to give us ideas, which gives us something to talk about at the next meeting, and so on and so forth. Another thing the student government does is write this monthly column for the Clinton *Courier*.

If are not in a class with representatives, for example, K-3rd grade students, you should still feel free to give your ideas to any older children who can deliver that message or idea to a representative or other government member.

Now you know a little bit more about the student government and how it works. —Austin Romanoux

GOOD NEWS

We thought you would be interested in the following letter from Superintendent Brian Osborne:

Dear Ms. O'Neill,

According to my records, there has been a 74% reduction in the number of suspensions over last year as of February 1st, 2009. There were 6 suspensions September through January this year as compared to 23 for the comparative timeframe last year.

Congratulations to you and your staff for such a significant reduction. Keeping our students in school, encouraging their positive behavior, and creating alternatives to suspension are critical aspects of supporting their academic and social-emotional development. While suspensions are at times the most appropriate institutional response, those instances should be curtailed as much as possible, and I salute Clinton for the efforts in this direction so far this year.

Appreciatively,
Brian Osborne

CLASSROOM NEWS CONTINUED

When Mrs. Ceccacci fractured her wrist and dislocated her thumb recently she worried that her teaching would suffer. She and Ms. O'Neill approached the district about getting an LCD projector to be hooked up to Mrs. Ceccacci's computer so she could use her keyboard to teach her lessons. The new technology worked brilliantly and also enabled the class to begin an email correspondence with former Columbia High School student Sarah Nevius, who is in the Peace Corp. in Azerbaijan. For more details, check out the article on the district website, www.southorangemaplewood.org.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Many thanks to **Amber Andrews** and **Brenda Allen** for putting together the African American History display case on the Tuskegee Airmen. Also thanks to **Thora Murray-Lee** and **Deidra McLaughlin** for their contributions. Knowing that members of the Clinton community are related to these heroes—and everyday makers of African American History—really brings history to life.

This month is Women's History Month—a chance to learn about and celebrate the contributions of great women from around the globe.
—*Tricia Bloom*

INTERNATIONAL DINNER IS COMING

Get ready for the **Seventh Annual International Dinner, "A Taste of Clinton,"** to be held on **Thursday, March 26th from 6:15 to 7:45 pm.** This wonderful event brings together the culturally and ethnically diverse families that make Clinton School so very special. Share in the delicious array of international dishes prepared by our own Clinton families. So come and socialize with other Clinton families over a fabulous meal. In order to make this event a success we need your help. Please let us know if you are willing to prepare a dish for the dinner or volunteer a bit of your time by aiding with set-up, clean-up, or other miscellaneous tasks. Please contact Robin Davenport at 973-763-9165 or rdavenpo@caldwell.edu.

FLOWER POWER

As Spring approaches, look for **Clinton's Spring Mother's Day Plant Sale** order forms in your child's backpack. This new fundraiser is a wonderful opportunity for you to help support Clinton School as well as enjoy Mother's Day and beautify your gardens. Many flowers and plants will be available including flats of Ageratum, Begonias, Dahlias, Dusty Millar, Impatiens, Marigolds, Petunias, and Salvia in a wide variety of colors. There will also be potted plants possibly including Dracaena Spikes, Trailing Petunias, Ivy Geraniums, and New Guinea Impatiens in various colors. The orders will be available for pick up before Mother's Day.

Please contact Elizabeth Deutsch at EDeutsch2001@verizon.net if you have questions or if you can volunteer to help. As with all of our efforts, this program will only succeed with your help, so please consider volunteering some of your time.

HEALTHY SNACK CORNER

The Clinton Courier is pleased to debut this new monthly column dedicated to offering fun, easy-to-make, and healthy snack options for kids. We welcome any suggestions from our readers. If you have an idea for a nutritious snack, please email it to Liz Herring at echerring@verizon.net.

In honor of St. Patrick's Day, we thought it would be appropriate to present this delectable green recipe:

Shamrock Shake

2 cups of milk
2 cups of lime sherbet
2 ripe bananas

Add all the ingredients to a blender and mix until smooth. Pour it into a clear glass and slurp it down with a straw! Delicious!

ALMOST SHOW TIME!

There are many world travelers at Clinton School this month, as over 250 students join forces on our spring theatre show, *Around the World in 80 Minutes*. With over 15 countries represented, we'll travel around the globe to places as far as Africa and Japan and as near as New Orleans and San Francisco.

In addition, our music teacher, Ms. Martin, will be leading a group in song. So, don't miss seeing the bright, shiny faces of our beautiful children as they sing, dance, and act their hearts out, in beautiful costumes and with vivid scenery all made by their friends—and parents!

For everyone involved in the show, please be sure to mark your calendars for the extra rehearsals as well as the three performance times:

Technical rehearsals: 3:00 – 5:30 p.m., Tues., March 10 and Thurs., March 12

Dress rehearsal: 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., Thurs., March 19

Performances (children expected 1-2 hours prior to curtain): 7:00 p.m., Friday, March 20
11:00 a.m., Saturday, March 21
3:00 p.m., Saturday, March 21

Tickets are limited to 3 per family, due to the small capacity of our auditorium. Feel free to attend the dress rehearsal if you need more than 3 seats and/or want to bring younger children (please, no one under 4 years old). Thanks for understanding.

Cast party for all performers and crew is scheduled to follow the final performance on Saturday. Please volunteer to help with this celebration!

—*Clare Payton*

CLINTON FOOD DRIVE

Inspired by a 100-day project that former Clinton parent Claire Sinclair organized at Tuscan School (where she teaches kindergarten), the Clinton School Tricky Tray Committee and PTA Executive Board have decided to run a food drive to benefit families in the Clinton community. Since Claire is the founder of the Clinton School Tricky Tray, it seemed appropriate to kick off the food drive that evening. The response was overwhelming. Thanks to those of you who donated food, supermarket gift cards, and cash donations at the Tricky Tray. We will continue this food drive through St. Patrick's Day week, so if you did not attend the Tricky Tray, you can bring your non-perishable food donations to Clinton School (a collection box will be in the front hallway), or send them in with your child.

Some have been luckier than others during these difficult economic times, so sharing that luck seems an appropriate thing to do during the St. Patrick's Day season. Ours is a close-knit and caring school community and that is something for which we should all feel very lucky.

SPRING ENRICHMENT

The spring session of the Clinton PTA's After School Enrichment Program will begin on Thursday, **April 2nd and end on Thursday, May 28th**. As always, classes will begin directly after school on Thursday afternoons and pick up is at 4:15 pm sharp. Registration materials will be sent home in backpacks during the week of March 9th. Contact Cecelia Cancellaro at ccancellaro@verizon.net or 973-763-1730 if you have questions.

CLINTON KIDS CONNECTION TO HIT THE STANDS ON MARCH 27

As reported in last month's *Courier*, thanks to a generous grant from SOMEF, as well as a donation from a private donor, Clinton School now has its very own student newspaper. Fourth graders will produce the first issue (due this month), and 5th graders will produce the second issue (due in June).

Twenty-four 4th graders signed up to be a part of the newspaper team, which met a few times each week during lunch and recess during the process. Working with Clinton parents who are professional writers and editors, these amazing students came up with story ideas, wrote and edited stories, took photographs and selected illustrations, and conducted interviews. They even came up with three potential names for the student publication, one of which was selected by a school-wide vote. Due to their talent and tremendous energy, the first issue of the *Clinton Kids Connection* will make its print debut on Friday, March 27th. It will also appear on our website: www.clintonelementary.org

In addition to a fabulous interview with our new art teacher, Ms. Christine Tischio, an entertaining story about the pets of Clinton School, an informative article about Clinton's green initiatives, an overview of endangered animals in our world and a wonderful piece about bullying, the *Clinton Kids Connection* also includes a review with Queen Nur, the star of our recent cultural arts assembly program, a report on the student government's Candygrams fundraiser, a piece about the dancers-in-residence who have been working with our 4th grade students, and an insider's glimpse into our first all-school musical revue, "Around the World in 80 Minutes." You'll also find horoscopes that will make you laugh out loud and a sports survey that gives the inside scoop on the favorite at-home and in-school sports of Clinton students.

The students worked together in small groups, each taking part in the research, writing, and editing of their stories. They took copious notes in their reporter's notebooks, conducted professional interviews using digital recorders and cameras, and shared their stories with, and invited feedback from, their peers. They are to be applauded for their enthusiasm, their professionalism, and their talent.

Thanks to SOMEF and the private donor who made the newspaper possible, to Ann Bodnar for sponsoring the grant, to Mrs. Meta Johnson for letting us use her classroom for meetings, and to Cecelia Cancellaro, Liz Herring, Bob Hugel, and Eli Connaughton for facilitating the process.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FESTIVITIES

Don't forget to wear green on March 17th! And be sure to come to school a little early in order to catch the bagpiper pipe the kids into the building!

BOX TOPS CLIPPERS

We collected \$57 worth of Box Tops in February! Great job! Keep on clipping! **Please do not forget to write your child's name, grade, and teacher on the envelope or baggie so we can include them in the *Courier*.** Any questions, contact Stephanie Mose at stephdog45@yahoo.com.

Kindergarten: Cosmas- Sylvie S., Grace U., Cole L., Jenna W.

Shelffo- Ben B.

Swan- Brandon K.

1st Grade: Cutrufello- Ethan M., Juliana Y.

Marr- Chelsea G.

2nd Grade: Frascella- Chloe C.

Froelich- Nick W.

Hall- Juliet A., Ceci M.

Poutre- Jack K., Joshua R.

3rd Grade: Kent- Jasper S.

4th Grade: Khan- Brian E., Kayla F., Lyric P.

5th Grade: Ceccaci- Alaina B., India I.

Kirkland- Socrates M.

THE CLINTON GREEN

It's spring cleaning time, and green cleaning products have been slowly making their way onto the market and into our homes. They are, for the most part, terrific hard-working green alternatives to those toxic products of yesterday.

Our very concept of clean has been clouded by advertisers sending us frightening messages that dirt is "tough" and needs an "industrial strength" solution and that any bacteria is "unclean" and must be "eliminated" with bleach. Chlorine bleach is terrible for the environment, and many studies show that anti-microbial products are doing way more damage by encouraging the growth of "super" bacteria.

The truth is that you already have in your home the most powerful, effective, and economical tools you'll ever need to clean your entire house: water and elbow grease! Since all conventional products contain well over 70% water, why pay for it when you still have to scrub?

Instead go out and purchase two simple, cheap ingredients—white vinegar and baking soda—and make your own green products. It's truly amazing what these two can accomplish. If you are feeling ambitious, also purchase washing soda (Arm & Hammer) and borax (20 Mule Team). Then, make the following green cleaning recipes and have a blast.

In the kitchen, an easy all-purpose cleaner can be made from 50% water and 50% white vinegar, with a drop or two of liquid dish soap (green, please). Boom, you're off! It works on everything! For baked-on messes, soak them in straight vinegar and use kosher salt for a terrific abrasive. Rub kosher salt onto cutting boards. In the oven, scrub down with a baking soda paste. Use vinegar, hot water, and a few drops of liquid dish soap on any type of floor (wood floors shine with vinegar). If fragrance is important to you, then add a few drops of an essential oil like lemon or even lavender to any of the mixes listed here. Essential oils can be found at Whole Foods and in many other natural food stores.

That's all we have room for this month, but look to this column in April for more tips on cleaning your house the natural, environmentally friendly way! —Clare Payton

2008-2009 PAC MEMBERS

Kindergarten: Elizabeth Aaron, John von Brachel
First Grade: Kris Stringer, Geraldine Caparruva
Second Grade: Keli Anthony-Tianga
Third Grade: Ruth Lowenkron, Nancy Friedman
Fourth Grade: Heather Spencer, Francine Anderson-Campbell
Fifth Grade: Karen Lynch, Sandra Haim
Member at Large: Mary Barber
Principal: Patty O'Neill
Assistant to the Principal: Ann Bodnar
PTA President: Cecelia Cancellaro
PTA Vice President: Karen Bethel

Check out the Clinton website, www.clintonelementary.org, where you'll find the latest Clinton School news.

DRUM/GUITAR LESSONS

Gabriel Marr, a Columbia High School senior headed to the Berklee College of Music, is available to teach drum/guitar lessons. The cost is \$10 for a 1/2 hour lesson. For more information, please call 973-902-9239 or see Deborah Marr.



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PAC ANNOUNCEMENT

Principal O'Neill recently asked the members of PAC to restructure how and when the committee meets with an eye toward being able to address concerns or questions that arise in the Clinton community in a more effective and efficient manner. In the past PAC met once per month, which meant that by the time information or questions got from parents to PAC reps to the principal weeks had gone by before an issue could be addressed. Starting in March PAC reps are going to be communicating with Principal O'Neill on a more frequent basis so that she can bring information to her teachers and staff at weekly grade level meetings. From this point forward, please do not wait for a reminder email or request to bring a question or concern to PAC. Instead please contact your grade level reps at any time, and ask them to forward your concerns to the principal. Instead of monthly meetings, PAC members will now contact Ms. O'Neill as issues arise instead of once per month at evening meetings.

FOURTH GRADERS DANCE AROUND THE WORLD

Thanks to a generous grant from the Artists-in-Education Consortium, which includes the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Arts Horizons, and Young Audiences New Jersey, 4th graders at Clinton Elementary School have spent months working with professional dancers learning dances from around the world.

Acclaimed dancer and choreographer Nancy Turano, who is Artistic Director of the New Jersey Dance Theater Ensemble, along with two other members of NJDTE, I-Fang Huang and Fabrice Lamego, have been visiting the school on a weekly basis teaching dances from Latin America, the Caribbean, and China. The three dancers have years of experience and very impressive dance resumes, and their extraordinary talent and commitment has been extremely well-received by Clinton students. The dance program ties in with the 4th grade immigration curriculum and it also celebrates the rich cultural diversity that exists in abundance at Clinton, which hosts the district's English Language Learning population. "I have been providing dance education classes for 25 years and have never seen such diverse ethnic groups of students in one room," says Ms. Turano. "It amazes me how they are always excited, fully engaged, and respectful of one another." In addition to the three dancers, Clinton students will also have the opportunity to work with Hector Morales, a percussionist, during the program.

The residency will culminate with a final performance on Friday, March 20th at 1 pm in the Clinton School Auditorium. The students are busily preparing for the big day which, according to Ms. Turano, "will showcase the process of the work we've done at Clinton and the day-to-day learning of cultures through dance, which has been the core of this residency."—*Cecelia Cancellaro*

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